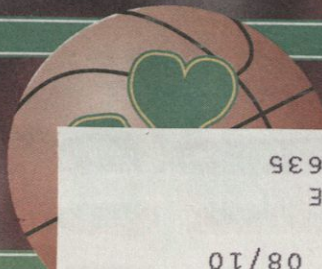


CELTICS

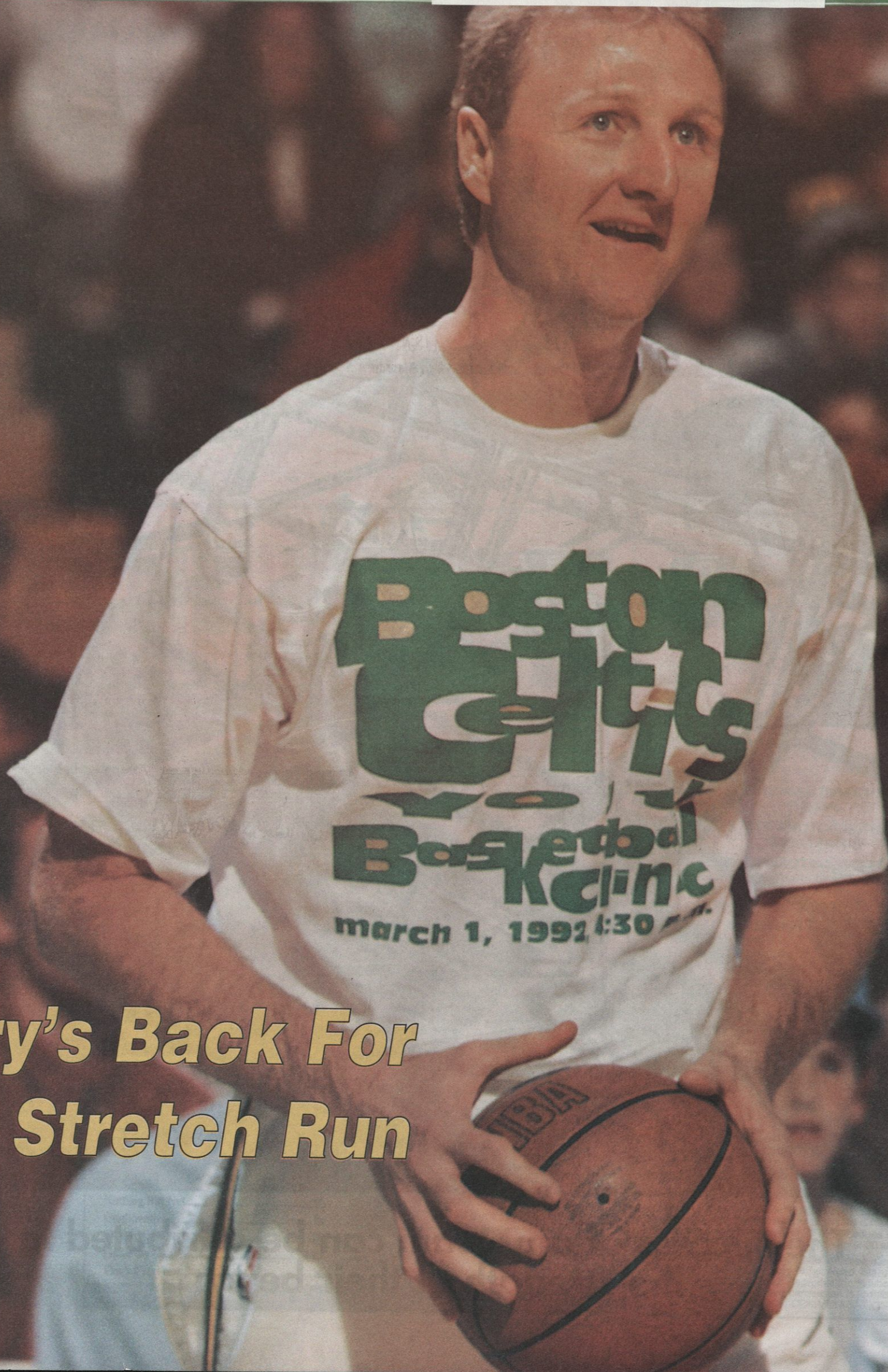


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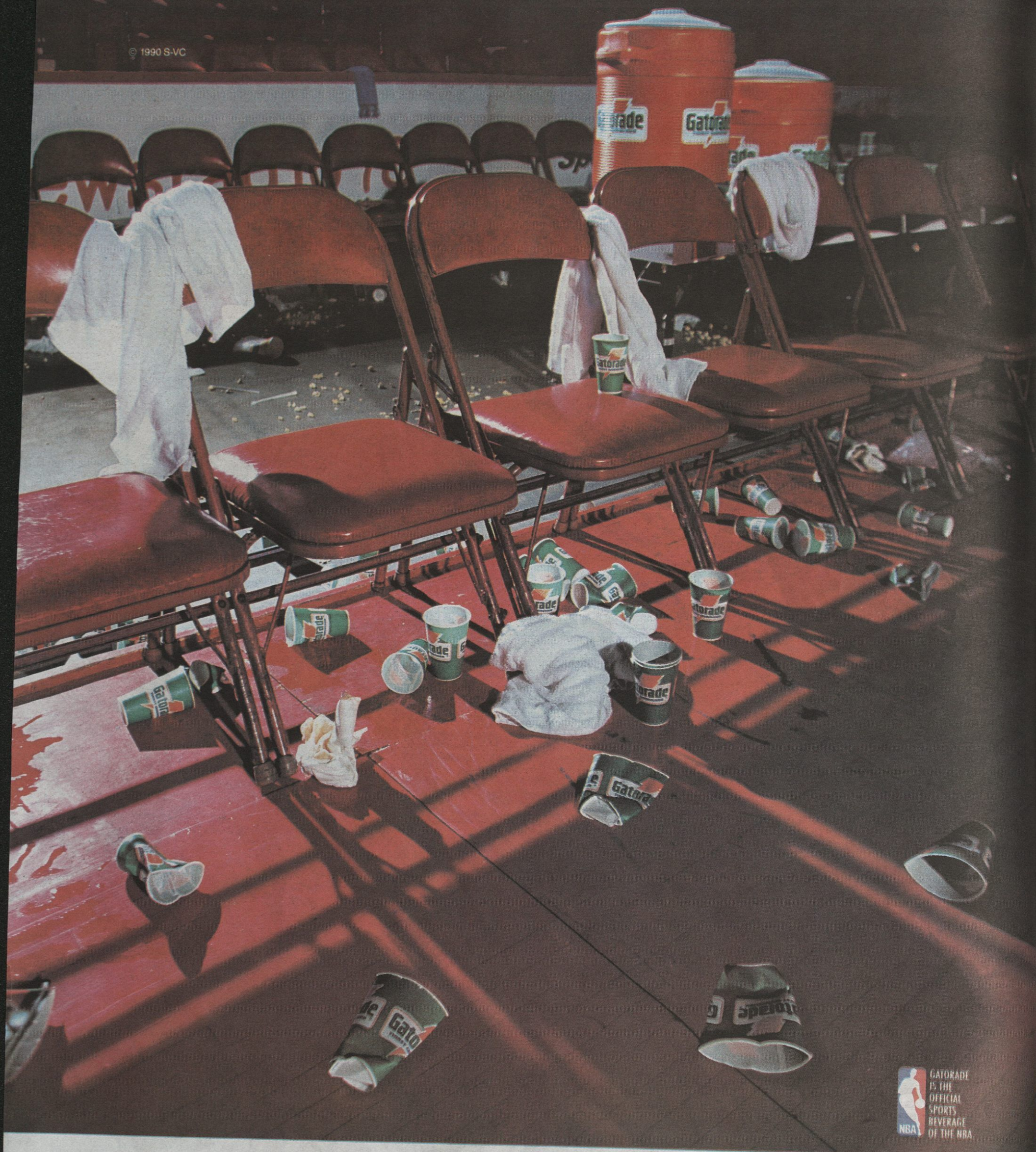
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**Larry's Back For
The Stretch Run**



The success of any team can be attributed to the strength of their bench.



CELTICS PRIDE

By Porter McKinnon

The loss to Miami on March 10 kicked off the most critical stretch of the season. Including that game, the men in green play ten games in a row against probable playoff teams. If you count playing at Hartford a home game, they play five at home and five on the road. If they are to be believed as a serious playoff contender they must make a good showing in that stretch (at least 6 wins).

All the pieces are in place with Bird back in the lineup. They are as healthy now as you can expect to ever see them. One thing is for sure, to have a chance during this stretch, someone on the Celtics is going to have to step forward as a defensive stopper. They play pretty good "team" defense with Bird and McHale back.

One thing is for sure, someone on the Celtics is going to have to step forward as a defensive stopper.

but they are not as quick as they were in the past as a team on defense. So it's time for someone to step forward and play some great "D." Maybe Reggie Lewis?

It's time for Sherman Douglas to start to

VIEW POINT

A CRITICAL STRETCH OF THE SEASON

earn his salary. If Dee Brown has to concentrate more on defense, than Sherman will have to make his presence felt on offense.

• • • • •

A few weeks ago I mentioned that if the Sixers wanted to get rid of Sir Charles Barkley, that we should gladly take him off their hands. Maybe I was wrong. I love how he plays, but he is probably just too much of a distraction. In addition to all of his quotes in his book he has also been a little too quotable the last few weeks. He must have employed a comedy writer because I just can't picture him thinking some of those thoughts.

Last week he was quoted on the prospects of the Sixers winning the championship: "We're just not quite good enough. Face the facts. We're close — like Phyllis Diller is close to becoming Miss America, that's how close we are." Isn't he too young to remember Phyllis Diller?

This week he announced, "I'm a '90s nigger; the *Daily News*, *The Inquirer* have been on my back. Everything I do is wrong. They want their black athletes to be Uncle Toms. I told you white boys you've never heard of a '90s nigger. We do what we want to do. It's always a racial thing. Racism always exists. I'm going to be a little more vocal now, striking back at you guys."

How bad do you think he wants to be traded? Better yet, what coach or owner of a team that might want to trade for him would want to read a steady diet of these types of quotes in his daily paper?

It has to be tough for a team to concentrate on basketball with him around.

• • • • •

Speaking of quotes, did you see the comments of Dallas Mavericks' forward, Terry Davis, after having to guard Bird in Larry's first game back where he had 21 points, 14 rebounds and 9 assists? Davis said, "I see why they say he's the greatest. One time, I was so close to him I could have kissed him and he still put the ball in the basket." Perhaps if he kissed him, Larry would have missed the shot. •

LINEUP FEATURES

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE PAST AND PRESENT

It has been said there is no future in the past, that success depends on constant evolution and forward movement. On the other hand, the past — in the form of tradition of 16 World Championships — is the embodiment of the Boston Celtics. The past and present are irrefutably intertwined. So, just what does the immediate future hold for this team?

Page 7

SEARCHING FOR AN ELUSIVE CHEMISTRY

With new faces being ushered in and out and different combinations constantly thrown together, it wasn't easy to come together as a team. Though things are hardly ironed out, the return of Dee, Kevin and Larry is a start in the right direction as the Celtics head towards the playoffs.

Page 12



DEPARTMENTS

Sound Off.....	4
Coaches Corner.....	5
Color It Green.....	6
Halfcourt Press.....	8
Innerview.....	9
Ask Red.....	10
Perspective.....	13
Nothing But Net.....	16
Confidential.....	18
Yesterday's Heroes.....	20
Game By Game.....	22-23
Fan's Eye View.....	26

COVER

Larry Bird, the old script writer from Indiana may have come to save the day in Boston, resurrecting the lifeless Celtics into a viable playoff contender once again. The man is hardly a myth. His legend lives on and his legacy grows with every passing chapter of his storybook career.

Page 14

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CELTICS PRIDE

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By Porter McKinnon

Not Happy with Ford

Dear Sound Off,

Everyone knows that even the greatest basketball coach cannot win consistently without talented players. So what is Chris Ford's excuse? After having to stomach yet another loss (Golden State, via TNT, 2/19/92) on this disgraceful six-game road trip, I had to write.

All teams will falter to some degree when their leader goes down, but the Celtic's 29-23 record (as of 2/19/92) is inexcusable. Where does one put the blame then? In this case it is quite obvious: Chris Ford. All season long Ford has shown his inability to: 1) prepare the Celtic for games, 2) make proper adjustments during the course of a game, and 3) motivate the team to play at a consistently high level of play no matter who the opponent.

Ford's inability to prepare his team and devise a competent game plan was never more apparent than the nationally televised loss to Golden State. Every NBA fan knows to beat Golden State the opponent must shut down or at least contain Tim Hardaway, Chris Mullin and Sarunas Marciulionis. Thus, one would assume the opposing coach would implement a defensive plan to help control these players and force the scoring responsibility to less explosive players on the Warrior's roster. Did Ford do this? Absolutely not! These three average an amazing 68 points per game combined, but against the Celtics they poured in 93 out of 117 points (79% of the team's total points).

The Golden State game was also a perfect example of Ford's inability to make appropriate adjustments during a game. From the onset it was obvious John Bagley did not have the quickness to stay with Tim Hardaway. However, Ford chose to leave Bagley in for almost the entire first period, even though Hardaway was scoring at will. When Ford finally did make a move he put Sherman Douglas on Hardaway and not Dee Brown, the only Celtic quick enough to stay with Hardaway. As the third period started it was obvious that Ford had not made any adjustments at halftime to form a defense to keep the ball out of Hardaway's hands. By the time Ford finally realized Dee could not only shut Hardaway down, but also make him have to work on defense, it was too late. Hardaway ended up with a career-high 43 points.

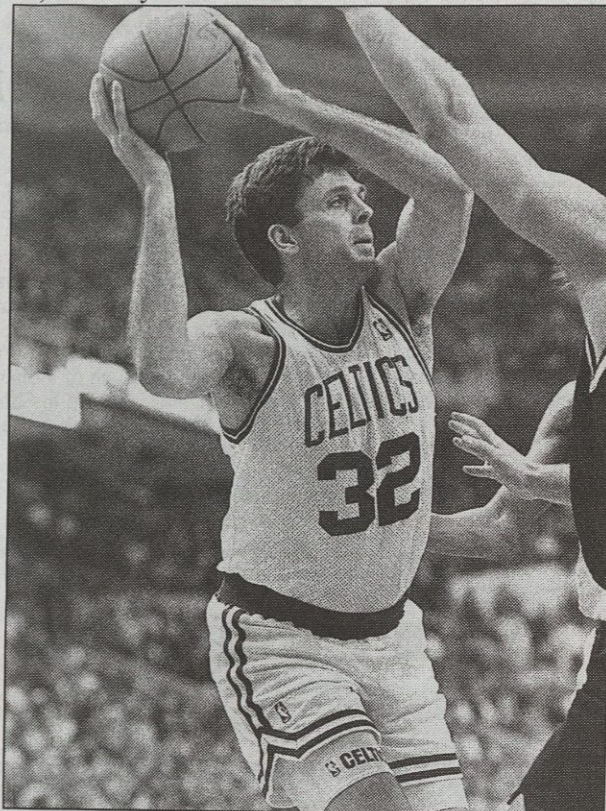
With recent losses to Minnesota twice, New Jersey and Dallas, it is obvious Ford cannot motivate his team for every game. I realize these players are professionals and should be self-motivated. However, with the absence of the "Big Three" (Bird, McHale, Parish) on the court, many of the young Celtics need a source of inspiration and direction on how to prepare and play each game like a "True Celtic." This is why it is imperative that Ford be the lead source of motivation.

I can only hope that the Boston brass is carefully analyzing the future of the Boston Celtics with Chris Ford as the head coach. A change must be made soon, or there will be no hope of giving the "Big Three" one more championship ring. In my opinion, either Doug Collins or K.C. Jones would be ideal replacements.

Patrick Hetherington
Gresham, OR

It is no coincidence that Chris Ford has made Dee Brown the starter at the point and Bagley has been relegated to the bench. Quickness on defense has to be one of the big reasons.

Like all of us, Chris Ford makes mistakes from time to time — after all, he's only human. As I'm sure



Is McHale still tradeable?

you realize, coaches get too much of the credit when teams win and too much when they lose. If you were able to turn back the clock five years and give youth and health to Bird, McHale and Parish, then Chris Ford would be coach of the year.

I like Chris as a coach. With all the injuries he has had since becoming head coach, his record is surprisingly good. Remember that he is relatively new at being a head coach. He is learning just like the young players. I think all he needs is patience and players.

Players make most coaches. Is Chuck Daly a worse coach over the last few years, or are his players different? What was the difference with K.C. Jones from the Celtics championship year of 1986 and when he was fired this year by Seattle? Maybe he had a stroke and his philosophies changed. I doubt it. He just didn't have the players to fit his coaching.

Reload for the Future

Dear Sound Off,

I agree with Mr. McKinnon, the Celtics should reload for the future. Currently, the Celtics can't beat the Bulls.

However, while I see this draft as deep, I don't feel the Celtics should trade players like Gamble for late No. 1's. All the good PF/C will be gone and drafting borderline NBAers like Matt Geiger or Keith Tower doesn't do it

SOUND OFF

for me. Trading for picks higher than No. 18 would be worthwhile, however.

The Celtics don't seem to need McHale as much. I'd hate to see McHale in another uniform, but why not in a Warrior's? Under Don Nelson, 20 minutes a game of providing low-post scoring would take them to another level. That should be worth a No. 1.

There are many other teams looking for help in the middle.

One more year of the veteran leadership of Bird and Parish will go a long way to improving the young players and their confidence. Then, when the rest of the Big 3 retire, we should have some cap room to sign a free agent. Mix in a daring trade and the Celtics will challenge for it all again.

Robert T. Lilga
Apollo Beach, Florida

I don't think Kevin McHale is tradable in his current physical condition, but you bring up a very interesting idea.

Don Nelson is definitely the type to take a chance on him. He wants to win a championship more than anyone I know.

Of course, the Warriors' draft choice will be very late in the first round due to their excellent record. If the draft were today they would have the 23rd pick in the first round. This year, that could be a decent player to build with.

You are correct when you suggest that just being around Bird and Parish can really improve young players. Just watching them night after night can be an excellent learning experience. However, a number of players have come to the Celtics and gone without learning anything. It depends on the attitude of the players.

To challenge again, the Celtics will definitely have to mix in a "daring" trade or two.

Need an Inside Player

Dear Sound Off,

Porter, I agree with you 100% on your viewpoint comments regarding the Sherman Douglas acquisition. The trade will definitely be beneficial, but it does not solve their most immediate problem, the need for a big, quick inside player. With Sherman, Dee and Reggie, the Celtics will have possibly the best backcourt in the league, but myself and many other Celtic fans are still wondering when

the team is going to make the move for the big forward/center that will give them some speed and youth in the low post. We all know we need someone quick enough to play some tough defense on the likes of Scottie Pippen, Kevin Willis and Charles Barkley. I agree with you, and think the current team is that one big man away from being able to challenge the Bulls, and their vulnerability against younger teams has definitely shown this year in losses to teams such as Minnesota, Charlotte and New Jersey. Now is the time, before the team returns to its pre-Bird era status, to obtain at least one big young player that can give Robert, Larry and Kevin some consistent bench scoring, rebounding and defensive ability that Kleine or Vrankovic or Gamble are unable to give.

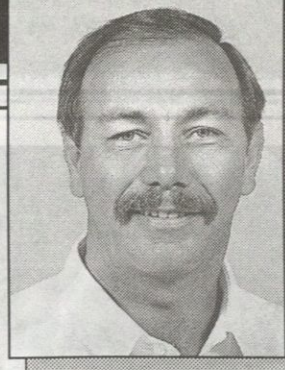
Do you know whatever happened to former slam dunk champ, NY Knick Kenny "Sky" Walker? I haven't seen him in the NBA; did he go to Europe? At 6'10 and with great rebounding, shot blocking and coring ability, I'm sure he would love to play for the Celtics against his former team, who gave up on him, and could provide the Celtics with just the type of player they need. Also, Loy Vaughn isn't getting much playing time with the Clippers, is a great pounder inside, and the Celtics still have too many small forwards; how about a deal for him and the Clippers' first round pick next year? They haven't been too lucky with draft picks, and I think next year's draft, with the likes of Alonzo Mourning, Shaquille O'Neal, Christian Laettner, Malik Sealy, Adam Keefe and possibly Harold Miner, Bobby Hurley and Jim Jackson, will be one of the deepest in years and could provide the Celtics with a couple of bright young stars to build on their future. I don't see Joe Kleine or Vrankovic as the Celtics' future center or big low post player. I just don't think the team can go too far in the playoffs, even if the Big Three are healthy, without limiting their time to between 30 and 40 minutes a game, and getting some big, quick inside help that it is obvious Pinckney, Kleine and Vrankovic can't give. Also, do you know how long the Bulls will have the rights to Tony Kucoc of Yugoslavia? This is the only European player I think the Celtics should waste their time on. He is extremely talented and I hope we don't see him playing for the Bulls, or we could be in trouble.

John Lyell
Riverside, CA

First, I think it's quite a stretch to suggest that Sherman, Dee and Reggie could possibly be the best backcourt in the league. Hopefully, they will mature and learn their positions, but presently they have a long way to go.

You are correct that Kenny Walker did go to Europe this year, but he ruptured his achilles tendon and is now out for the season. He would not have been much of an answer for the Celtics. All he was was a nice guy with a bad haircut. He could rebound and block shots, but he was not a scorer and was prone to mental lapses.

I wouldn't mind having Loy Vaughn, plus the Clippers seem to be trying to get rid of all of their first round picks. There has to be a way to take them off their hands. •



By Chris Ford

Needless to say, it's been a newsworthy few weeks for us. And there have been decidedly mixed reviews. For the first time in recent memory we endured a stretch when we lost eight of eleven games, and this necessitated some change, which I'll discuss below.

Fortunately, we were bolstered by the return of first Kevin McHale and then Larry Bird. Even as we were losing during this period, we became stronger, finally having nearly our full complement of players back together again.

It was the first time we'd had our team whole all season. **The Problem Areas.** During the month of February, one coach told a writer on the staff of this magazine that he couldn't believe that the league forced us to play the type of road schedule we played in the month of February. That is, we played the entire Texas trip and then had a difficult trip to the west coast. In addition to the demanding rigor of that trip, we were attempting to plug both Dee Brown and Kevin back into the lineup, and this, in turn, forced me to juggle the entire rotation.

On the floor, we struggled with a number of problems, including matters such as our switching and rotating defensively. But most disconcerting was the lack of energy on offense. We alluded to our scoring problems in

fourth quarters in Oakland against the Warriors and in the game previous to that one, in Utah. That latter game was perhaps the low point of the season; after outplaying the team with the best home record in the league for three quarters, our offense abruptly stopped, we managed only one field goal in the fourth quarter and lost, 88-83. Ten days later the struggles continued — for the first time all season, Reggie Lewis appeared to be tiring, and we were outplayed decisively again in the fourth quarter by the Atlanta Hawks in the Omni, losing 102-90. The defeat sent our road record spiraling to 10-20. We had lost ten of our last eleven on the road.

Change. Before we played the Atlanta Hawks, our coaching staff, including Don Casey, John Jennings and myself, had met and had made a series of changes designed to establish a number of things leading up to the playoffs. There were a number of factors to consider:

- The return to the rotation of Brown, Bird and McHale.
- The decision on what to do with Sherman Douglas.
- Selecting a set rotation for the playoffs.

After a long meeting, we chose to return Dee to the starting lineup, a place we felt he had rightfully earned during a spectacular, if aborted, pre-season. Behind him we would play Sherman Douglas, the very good young

point guard we acquired from the Heat in exchange for another guard we thought highly of, Brian Shaw.

In this way, we would begin to set up our rotation for the playoffs. We truthfully believe that John Bagley has had a fantastic season. Without him we wouldn't have been able to stay afloat during the year, a season when we've lost over 175 man games to injury. Right now, however, we need to have Dee in there as a starter and we need, at the same time, to find out what Sherman can do. His problems have been very apparent since coming to us; starting the season late because of a difficult holdout with Miami, he struggled to get into shape. His problems were compounded because of the trade; if there is any position on the floor most dependent on other players, it's that of the point guard, the man who has to be able to fully know the offensive tendencies of his teammates. Sherman has struggled to learn the

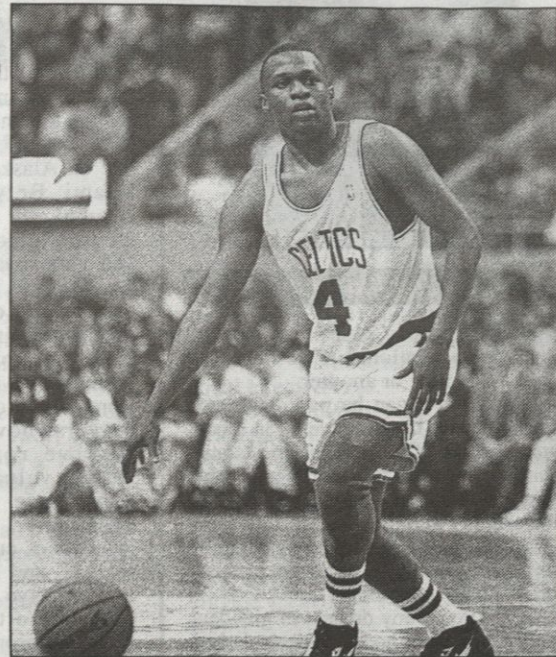
other guys' offensive preferences, particularly when injuries have forced numerous lineup changes.

From what we've seen of Dee Brown in a year and a half, we firmly believe he has every likelihood of becoming a genuinely great player in this league. It is only fair to the team, to him and to our supporters that we give him the opportunity (the minutes) to help him get to that plateau.

His return to the starting lineup enables us to extend our defense ninety-four feet. His outside shooting capability, as well, opens up our opponents' defense, and his ability to penetrate has already increased his per game assists by over four per game. And he was last season's Slam Dunk contest winner — he has the charisma to fire up both our team and our supporters, at home and on the road. This addresses the "energy" problem I described earlier.

We believe that with steady minutes coming off the bench, Sherman will benefit by the stability of minutes, and of knowing what's expected of him in a clearly defined role.

Having a Set Rotation. I've told the media on several occasions in the past year and a half that I want to play everybody, but there are only so many minutes in a basketball game. With



We feel that Sherman will be aided by a more defined role coming off the bench.

the return of Larry and Kevin, for example, this has meant a reduced role for Joe Kleine. Like Bags, Joe's play cannot be faulted in any way. It's a matter of limitations. There are only those forty-eight minutes.

Obviously, we were delighted with the strong comebacks of both Larry and Kevin. Bird came back on March 1, and immediately showed why he is one of the all-time greats, igniting our break with strong defensive rebounding, posing a multiple threat offensively, drawing the attention of entire defenses to thereby enable players like Reggie and Kevin Gamble to break free.

Kevin McHale was attempting to shrug off a minor ankle problem as I write this, but prior to that minor (hopefully) setback, he looked the best he has all season. His spins and fadeaways in the post were fluid and relaxed. His transition from offense to defense was certainly adequate. And as I said in the beginning, with Larry and Kevin back to join Dee Brown, we finally had our unit back together again. This is why we decided to sit down and construct a set rotation as we headed into the final twenty or so games of the regular season. Red Auerbach has said in these pages that teams actually need to play but eight — or nine — players in the playoffs. The games tend to be more of a halfcourt style and there are frequently added days of rest between games. There are more network telecasts and, as a result, additional time-outs to rest players.

We are very aware of the emotional component of the game. For example, how do players like Eddie Pinckney and Bags respond when suddenly their roles are dramatically reduced? We pride ourselves on being a closely knit unit and have discussed these changes with them. In the game of basketball, however, where team rhythm is critical, a team must have regularity in substitutions in order to get into sync. Essentially, we can expect, if we can remain injury-free, that Dee, Reggie, Robert Parish, Larry and Kevin Gamble will start and that the consistent minutes off of the bench will go to Sherman, Eddie, Rick Fox and, of course, Kevin McHale. This will be our foundation, an approach we plan to take right now as we head into the playoffs. •

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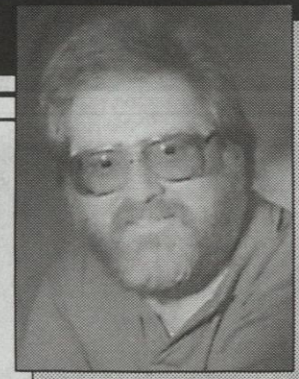
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By Jim Bianchine

The Boston Celtics remind us all of a relationship we have had one time or another.

At times it can be passionate and others rocky. It can leave us in a constant state of flux or euphoria, sometimes on top of the world and other times wallowing in the depths of uncertainty and depression.

To say the Celtics have been unsettling to the human psyche is a gross understatement.

First you enjoy dreams of grandeur, only to have your hopes suddenly dashed.

Then just when your mind is clear and you think you have accepted your fate and are coping with the realization that their time has passed and 1986 is nothing more than a gilded age to remember, they tease you with a flurry of basketball that sets your heart aflutter again.

Of course in basketball terms, I suppose close to the heart of all who read this publication, injuries have played a major role in the up and down world of your beloved boys in green, the inner torment of losing and the fluttering state of your stomach and shivering feeling down your spine when they win.

How many times have you promised yourself you would no longer hold your hopes high, only to be deflated once again?

Now that Larry Bird is healthy and for the first time in eons the Celtics are stringing together wins and have the first hint of the same cohesion they had when they burned up the league the first half of last season, your sacred credo to yourself is again in question.

Do remain true to yourself this time or break that promise and set yourself up for another fall?

Have you once again started the same thought shared by thousands upon thousands of Celtics fans? "Well, if they are all healthy..."

Then you try to rationalize. You start to form a logical list to merit your inner feelings welling up inside.

TIME OUT FOR TRIVIA

The playoffs are right around the corner, with only 20 or so games left in the season. As of March 1, almost 60 games are in the books. Have you kept up with what's been going on so far around the NBA? These questions apply to the NBA up to March 1.

1. Which Western Division team had the best record?
2. Which team (or teams) in the NBA had the best home record, and what was it?
3. How many NBA teams had winning records on the road, and can you name them?
4. Which player had the most points scored in a game so far this season, and how many did he score?
5. Who was leading the NBA in rebounding?
6. Who had the most blocked shots in a single game this year?
7. If the season ended on March 1, who would be the seven lottery teams?
8. What was the best single game rebounding performance of the season, and by whom?
9. Which team was leading the NBA in scoring?
10. The Celtics were in only one overtime game. Can you remember how they did?
11. Who is leading the NBA in free throw percentage?
12. Two NBA players were just about tied for the lead in steals for the season. Can you name them?
13. Reggie Lewis leads the Celtics in minutes played, with 2152. Who leads the NBA, with 2317?
14. Only three Celtics have played in all 58 games through March 1. Can you name them?
15. What was the Celtics home record through March 1?

Answers: 1. Portland; 2. Utah and Chicago were both 26-3; 3. Five; 4. Dominique Wilkins had 52 against the Knicks in November; 5. Dennis Rodman; 6. David Robinson; 7. In order: Minnesota, Orlando, Dallas, Washington, Sacramento & Denver (tied); 8. Kevin Willis had 33 rebounds (16 offensively) against Washington in February; 9. Golden State; 10. 70; 11. 46.4%; 12. Williams; 13. Rickey Green; 14. Lewis, Gamble and Fox; 15. 22-6.

COLOR IT GREEN

SHALL WE DARE BELIEVE?

They just broke a five-game road losing streak. Dee Brown is healthy too and adjusting to the point like an Alaskan to Miami. Between Brown and Bird the ball is moving like a hot spud.

Likewise Bird and now Kevin McHale are finally back and moving well. When they were absent, other players, now in reserve roles, gained valuable experience and confidence and the Celtics cultivated some new go-to-guys, and have as sturdy a bench as they have since Bill Walton sold his soul to the devil for one last healthy season.

Ed Pinckney continues to play like the co-ed who, at Villanova, chopped down mighty Georgetown. The Celtics have a rookie in Rick Fox who exudes enthusiasm and energy. Sherman Douglas is getting extended minutes and is starting to adjust and Bird is burying threes.

Four consecutive wins upon the return of the savior in short pants, Larry Bird is not enough to bet the mortgage over, especially since three of the four were against Orlando (twice) and Dallas. But it may be worth wearing your heart on your sleeve again anyway.

Aw go on. Go for it one more time. In unison repeat, "I believe."

Though much of the above is said in a tone of jest, quite frankly, the Celtics have been so dramatically up and down this season, they may just be unpredictable enough that they are going to be hard to figure out by foes in the playoffs.

If the renewed romance continues the way it has of late between you, the Celtics and winning basketball, things could really be very interesting.

Should a poll be taken around playoff time in the NBA, listing teams they would least like to face, I wouldn't be surprised if you find the Celtics near the top of the list if they sustain recent play.

If for no other reason, they will be puzzling to say the least. If we can't figure them out, maybe the opposition in

the early rounds won't either, and there's no telling what can happen if a team does get up a head of steam.

So to all you helpless romantics dreaming of eternal bliss and another magnificent golden trophy, let Cupid pull back his bow and let his go and chance the broken heart just one more time.

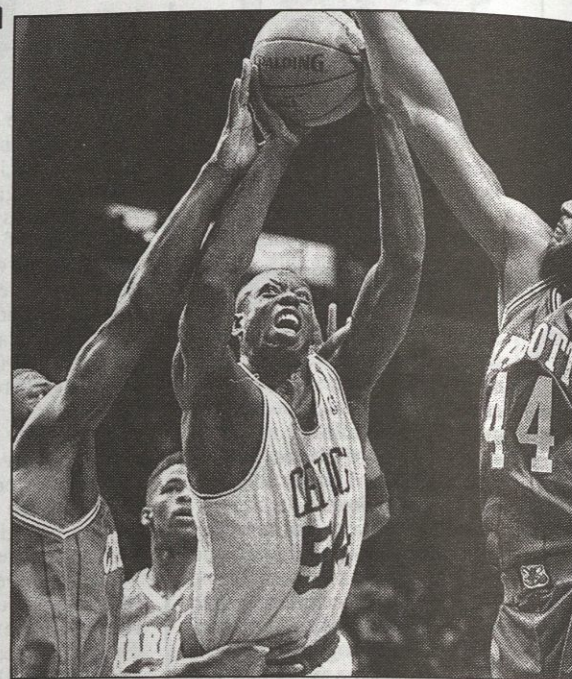
Bird's eyes widened as he went racing against two Orlando players toward the Magic bench for a loose ball. Chris Ford lost more hair as he cried out from the other side of the court, "easy Larry."

Bird put the breaks on as the ball went out of bounds. As he stopped short of the table, he looked down at yours truly and said, "no, not this year" ...For those who still don't believe the Nets' mini-resurgence is for real, take note. They beat in succession Boston, Portland, Detroit and New York. The Nets haven't reached the playoffs since 1986, but are tied for seventh in the eastern Conference standings.

There may be a shift in power in L.A. The Lakers, who have made the playoffs 15 straight years, as opposed to the Clippers who have failed for 15 straight years, are neck-and-neck in the Pacific Division standings. The Clippers last made the playoffs as the Buffalo Braves. The Clippers 29-28 record after 57 games was their best during the 15-year playoff drought. ...In a game of pure point guards, the Suns' Kevin Johnson scored 32 points and dished out 14 assists against the Jazz and John Stockton who had 14 points and 18 assists in a game won by Phoenix. Think KJ was trying to prove something in light of the fact Stockton was chosen for the Olympic team? ...Ironically Golden State ended a two-year losing streak at Sacramento dating back to December of 1989, despite the Kings' futility and the Warriors' success over that time. ...The Mavericks were called for a technical foul when they had six men on the floor against the Celtics. Coach Richie Adubato said, "we could have used eight guys out there."

Not yet rookie. In the Spurs' 115-112 win against Denver, David Robinson outscored Dikembe Mutombo, 34-7 ...In a recent game the Nets' Drazen Petrovic and Vlade Divac (Lakers) met for the first time since Croatia broke away from Yugoslavia. Petrovic is Croatian and Divac is Serbian. The two played together on the Yugoslavian European Cup championship team. ...The Celtics' back-to-back wins against Dallas and Orlando in early March marked the first time they had done that since Jan. 26-28. ...The Clippers have lost 12 straight to the Knicks, dating back to February of 1986. ...The Bulls have lost to only two sub-.500 teams all season. ...The Mavs have lost 17 in a row on the road and counting. ...The Celts suffered the ultimate indignity in New Jersey. A story the morning of their game with the Nets in the New York Post read, "The Nets had better make the most of tonight's battle with Boston because it's the only break they'll get over the next 11 games."

Golden State's Tim Hardaway spoke following the Warriors' loss to the Rockets after having led by 18 at the half. "We came out and laid an egg." Wonder if it a golden egg? Couldn't resist! ...The Lakers were anything but a cordial host to ex-coach Pat Riley of the Knicks upon his return to litter gulch after nine years of service on



Pinckney continues to play like the co-ed who chopped down mighty Georgetown.

their sideline. They held the Knicks to 68 points, a franchise-low since the inception of the 24-second clock in 1954. They also snapped a seven-game losing streak. ...The Wolves one-point win against Dallas marked the first time in 18 games they out-rebounded an opponent. ...Rising star Glen Rice of the Heat scored a career-high 38 against Denver. ...The Pistons finally beat the Bulls after eight straight losses, 108-106. In the nine games, Detroit only topped the 100 mark twice. Joe Dumars forced Michael Jordan into an air ball (only fitting) as he went for the game-tying shot at the buzzer. ...The Jazz have beaten the Clippers 17 of their last 21 meetings. ...The Bulls (10-22 at home) are the only team in the NBA with a better road mark (11-19). ...The Bucks last won in Chicago Stadium in April of 1988. ...The newest rumor has Magic Johnson playing in Europe next season.

The Nets have enjoyed three consecutive winning months for the first time since 1984. In a win against the Pistons, the Nets, playing without Derrick Coleman and Sam Bowie, got a career-high 25 points from Terry Mills. ...The Sixers have beaten the Bulls 14 of their last 18 meetings. ...The Hornets' four straight wins was a franchise record.

Wondering just how well this club, if healthy, might fare in post-season. While it hardly seems possible, it's been six seasons since the Celtics last hoisted an NBA Championship banner into the Garden rafters. They haven't been to the Finals since 1987, capping a seven-year run when they were crowned kings three times (1981, '84 and '86) and appeared in the finals five times.

Bird, Parish and McHale were the key elements in that glorious run and are the lone holdovers from the last championship team. Though long in the tooth, they still inspire visions of post-season glory.

Who can blame fans for wondering if they just might have one more championship drive left. It would be a fitting exclamation point to three Hall of Fame careers.

Such thoughts are obviously premature, but it is nonetheless interesting to engage in a bit of wishful speculation. Certainly makes for lively conversation at the neighborhood pub.

Caught Between the Past and Present

Can the Big Three Take It to the Limit One More Time?

By Kevin C. Doyle

It has been said there is no future in the past, that success depends on constant evolution and forward movement.

In a broad sense, that would seem so. On the other hand, the past — in the form of the tradition of 16 World Championships — is the embodiment of the Boston Celtics. Past and present are inextricably intertwined, the past prologue to the future.

Which begs the obvious question: "Just what does the immediate future hold?"

As they embarked on the final quarter of this, their season of endless disruption, it seemed as though an often-scrambled picture was finally coming into focus for the Celtics.

Larry Bird's return on March 1 from a 28-game absence sparked a four-game winning streak — modest, perhaps, but the club's longest in seven weeks. Granted, Dallas and Orlando (twice) are less-than-imposing foes and the Los Angeles Clippers remain an under-achieving, albeit improving, commodity.

Yet, it wasn't the caliber of opponent as much as it was how the Celtics won that sparked flames of excitement among their followers. Dallas fought gamely for a half before being routinely dispatched, 101-91. Nine players reached double figures as the Celtics blew away the Magic, 125-100. And Boston led by as many as 25 points in a resounding 117-100 sinking of the Clippers. Then, lo and behold, the Celtics whacked Orlando a second time for a win on the road.

"Any time you get a win, you feel real good. We played good basketball regardless of the opponent. These are games we have to win and we had a real good outing tonight," said Robert Parish following the torching of Orlando at The Garden.

Although an apparently minor aggravation of his tender left ankle forced a frustrated Kevin McHale to sit out the first Orlando game and the L.A. win, the Celtics' relaxed confidence and obvious re-dedication to aggressive defense had the fans wondering...

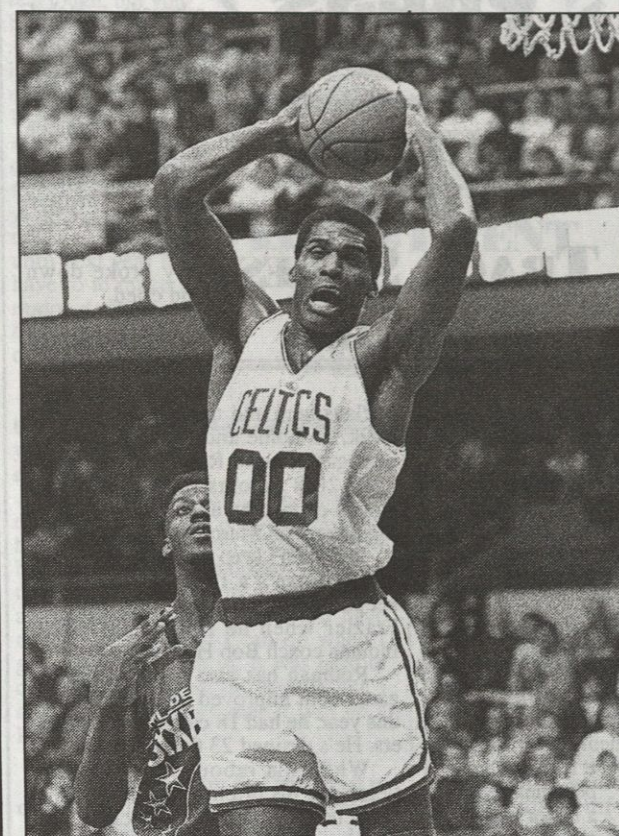
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Robert: "I think we're starting to come together. Slowly, things are starting to fall into place."

While their fans fantasize, the Celtics deal strictly in reality.

The key issue, of course, is the spectre of injuries that has hung over this team's head like the Sword of Damocles since pre-season. To a man, the players know their health is all-important and that their immediate task is to be ready by mid-April.

It will be difficult enough getting out of the Eastern Conference with all guns firing. At anything less than peak physical condition, attempting to de-throne the Champion Bulls becomes a virtual impossibility.

Just how conscious is everyone about staying healthy?

Late in the third period of the Orlando game, a relatively meaningless loose ball bounced towards the press table and Bird gave customary chase. In years past, he would have taken flight unflinchingly in an attempt to make a save. This time, coach Chris Ford yelled "Easy, Larry!" and Bird pulled up.

Every picture tells a story and that vignette spoke volumes — no Larry means early vacation.

"This is a tough time of the season for a lot of teams, but for us it's time to get it together and make a run for the playoffs. Hopefully, we can put everything together because everyone seems pretty healthy," noted Bird shortly after his return.

"I think we're starting to come together. Slowly, things are starting to fall into place. Those guys (Bird, McHale, Dee Brown) were out for a long time. They've got to get acclimated to us and to them. It'll be a while before we're a smooth, cohesive unit, but I think we're getting there," said Parish after

the Orlando win.

McHale, dejected by his latest setback, indicated he wouldn't play again until the ankle was "100 percent." Not to worry — he did, in fact, return with a 15-point outing at Orlando.

If everyone is ready for post-season, then what is this team's potential?

"Our potential? With the injuries, it's a question mark that will be answered in time. If Larry and those guys stay healthy, then the injuries will be a blessing in disguise. It's exciting," said Joe Kleine.

That "blessing in disguise" could come in the form of depth — more depth than the Celtics have had since the

'86 championship team.

The prime problem confronting Ford down the stretch was establishing a workable nine- or 10-man rotation and distributing minutes in such a fashion that everyone stays sharp but no one gets overworked.

He seemed to have a pretty good idea of how he would handle the chore. Against Orlando, no starter played more than 31 minutes and nine players reached double digits. In the L.A. win, no one saw more than 30 minutes and seven players were in twin figures.

"We have to get a look at certain people and this is the time to do it," said Ford, adopting the position that this stretch will serve as something of a training camp for the coming second season.

"We really don't know what this team is made of right now. That's because everyone hasn't been together. We've got some time, but what we have to do now, as individuals, is play better defense and work harder. If we do that, we have enough firepower to get the job done," said Bird, whose return obviously settled the Celtics and boosted their sagging confidence.

The most noticeable improvement has been a revitalized running game triggered by rugged defensive rebounding. "We're running because we're doing a good job rebounding. Larry's always been a very good defensive rebounder," said Parish.

"The key is getting the ball and pushing it up. You don't always have to get it into the point guard's hands. You can push it up, then look for the point guard as another option for an open shot," said Bird.

Once in control of the ball, alternating point men Brown and Douglas (alas — John Bagley, who capably steered this ship through some stormy seas, had been relegated to No. Three on the depth chart and had pulled four consecutive DNPs as this was written) have distributed the ball with equal effectiveness.

Brown moves the ball quickly and efficiently, sticks the open jumper and can pressure the bejebees out of opposing guards. Douglas is a slashing penetrator who will dish slickly to the open man.

"We're doing a pretty good job of moving the ball around. One of our biggest weaknesses for two or three months, even when I was playing, was getting everyone the ball. It's hard to defense a team that penetrates and kicks it back out. It's hard to beat a team when eight or nine guys are scoring," said Bird.

"We've had nice ball movement. I think that's a style we can play. The point guards have got us running and have created some open, easy jumpers. Teams are going to have to honor some of our players because they're such good one-on-one players," said Ford.

If all goes according to plan, come playoff time opponents will face the dilemma of how to defense the Celtics' halfcourt game — jumping at them and risk being burned; or sitting back and watching them drill jumpers.

The increased defensive intensity seems to coincide with the insertion of Brown into the starting lineup against Atlanta on February 27.

Brown worked over Orlando's Scott Skiles so thoroughly at The Garden in the game's first 10 minutes that Skiles — one of the league's toughest if not most physically gifted guards — grabbed some pine for the remainder of the half.

That willingness to work on defense — one of Bird's prime misdeeds upon his return — has apparently become contagious.

Then there's the depth. All the injuries allowed for Ed Pinckney, Rick Fox and Kleine to get more than their share of quality minutes. All have proven themselves and Ford won't hesitate to call on them.

"The guys off the bench don't necessarily have to score a lot of points. What they do is buy us some time because they play such great defense," said Ford.

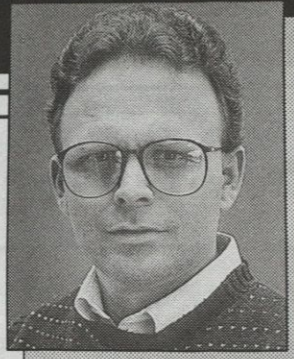
"Essentially, everyone has a role and has to be ready when called upon. Some nights you may not get your minutes, others you do. It all evens out and you have to be ready to go," said Kleine.

And what of the post-season?

The necessary ingredients are present, but will Ford have enough time to come up with precisely the right blend for success? Can the Big Three take it to the limit one more time?

"Potentially, with a veteran group like this, we can go a long way. These guys have all been there and they know how to win. The key is we have to stay healthy," said Douglas.

And, on that score, only the fates know for sure. ●



By Kevin C. Doyle

Did everyone see that green blur racing up and down The Parquet in the first week of March? Was that really an alley-oop from Sherman Douglas that Rick Fox threw down in the March 6 rout of the Clippers? Talk about revitalizing the offense and shifting gears.

After spending the better part of two months spinning their wheels while futilely attempting to run, the Celtics suddenly resemble a pack of greyhounds sprinting after the electronic rabbit.

Not surprisingly, the return of Larry Bird coincided with the Celtics' shedding their cement sneakers in favor of track shoes.

The rejuvenated transition game can be traced directly to hard work that led to improvement in two areas — defensive rebounding and a stepped up defensive effort.

Bird has long been recognized as perhaps the league's premier defensive boardman and his passing ability makes him the perfect triggerman on the

break. Beyond that, when the passing lanes get clogged, he's perfectly willing and once again able to lead the charge himself.

Pointmen Dee Brown and Douglas, who's nearing top condition, seem equally comfortable with the up-tempo game and halfcourt set. Ditto for the veteran John Bagley, who helped this team stay afloat during some trying times and will undoubtedly be ready to go when the need arises.

How important is this aspect of the Celtics' offense in the overall scheme of things? Less and less so the deeper a team advances into the post-season. The playoff game is a different beast, predicated on halfcourt offense and hard-nosed defense.

"The game really changes. It's more physical, it gets shortened by the halfcourt play and every possession is critical," said Joe Kleinfelder.

Given that, along with the running game's high risk quotient for turnovers,

it is clear why it becomes less of a factor in post-season. Nevertheless, it is an option teams would rather have and not need than not be able to call upon at all. That's what the Celtics are driving towards.

Besides, the open court game is a helluva lot more entertaining.

As far as the defense is concerned, it picked up with Brown's insertion into the starting lineup. His knack for harassment reduces the opposition's options and has been contagious. And, with the likes of Ed Pinckney and Fox working relentlessly on the Green Team, opponents can't catch a breather.

THE WORM TURNS: Is Dennis Rodman having a year or what?

"The Worm," who is pounding away to the rebound title,

ripped down a Detroit club record 34 rebounds — including a club mark 18 offensive — in the Pistons' 110-107 OT win against Indiana on March 4. He was so overcome upon learning he'd broken Bob Lanier's record that he actually broke down and cried.

"That's my role — to rebound and play defense and get a couple of buckets here and there. I do the dirty work, go home and get ready for the next game," said Rodman, who averaged 20.8 caroms over a 44-game stretch capped by a 98-93 win against the Lakers on March 8.

"We didn't keep them off the boards, but Rodman's a freak of nature. He keeps coming and coming, like Joe Frazier when he fought Ali," said Indiana coach Bob Hill.

Rodman has also rounded out his game with improved offense. Prior to this year, he had 18 career three-pointers. He's drained 23 this season.

While his rebounding has been fierce and his offense more than most expected, Rodman's schtick is still defense. Don't bet against his being named the league's Defensive Player of the Year once again.

STRAINED RELATIONS: The unfortunate civil war in Yugoslavia has produced some awkward moments among NBA players of Serbo and Croatian descent.

New Jersey's Drazen Petrovic, a Croat, and the Lakers' Vlade Divac, a Serb, were teammates on Yugoslavia's 1990 European Cup champions. On March 4, they were on the same court for the first time since their homeland burst into conflict last summer and their conversation was reportedly cool.

Divac's family still lives in Serbia and his 16-year-old brother Ivaca was drafted five months ago and sent to the front lines. The Lakers' center is on record as saying he doesn't begrudge Croatia's wish for independence, but says the war is stupid.

The Celtics' Stojko Vrankovic, a Croat, played with both Petrovic and Divac on the Yugoslavs' silver medal Olympic team in 1988. But when the Celtics played in L.A. in mid-February, the two didn't speak.

It's a universal truism — friendship and politics rarely mix.

AND ANOTHER THING: Ex-Celtic Don Nelson recently became the second coach — Red Auerbach was the first — in league history to win his 700th game in less than 1,200 starts... The Sonics' Eddie Johnson scored 26 points off the bench in a recent 106-91 win against Minnesota. The Terrible T'Wolves' Luc Longley had a season-high 19 points in that game... Sarunas Marciulionis continued his stellar play off the Golden State bench, pumping in

HALFCOURT

PRESS

PUTTING THEIR TRACK SHOES BACK ON



Dee is very comfortable with the up-tempo game.

22 points in a 138-131 win over Dallas... Detroit snapped a nine-game losing streak to Chicago with a 108-106 win on February 25. In that game, Joe Dumars' defense forced a rare Michael Jordan Air-Ball in the final seconds... The L.A. Clippers were outscored from the free throw line, 31-8, in a 106-101 loss to Utah... After going 0-10, Charlotte won for the first time when scoring less than 100 points with a 94-82 decision of Milwaukee... When the Nets embarrassed the Celtics at The Meadowlands, notorious brick-layer Chris Dudley — of all people — went 4-for-4 from the foul line to raise his season percentage to .448. Dudley also had 19 rebounds and four blocked shots... The Knicks set a club low for points since the inception of the 24-second clock in their 81-68 loss to the Lakers at The Forum — Pat Riley's first game back since leaving L.A. after the 1990 season. The Knicks also had a league season low of three free throws and Patrick Ewing went 4-of-18 from the floor. The win snapped a seven-game losing streak by the Lakers — their longest since moving from Minnesota 30 years ago... Hakeem Olajuwon had 33 points, including a game-winning buzzer-beater, to go along with 12 rebounds and nine assists in the Rockets' 118-116 win against Golden State... Miami's Glen Rice, in his first game back from a calf injury, poured in a career-high 38 points in the Heat's 105-98 win against Denver.

THEY SAID IT (honestly): Atlanta coach Bob Weiss after a visit by Himself, Ted Turner: "I think the key to the game was Ted Turner saying 'Hi' to the guys. Obviously, he's a better motivator than I am. Can we get him to come on the road with us?" C'mon Bob, admit it — you'd really rather have Mrs. Turner (Jane Fonda) make the trip, right?... Chris Ford, after the loss to the Nets in New Jersey: "You get paid to play 82 games and you have got to come to play every night. It looked like we caved in rather than digging down." No further comment necessary.

INNERVIEW

By Mike Spellman

The 1991-92 season has to date been a big disappointment for Sherman Douglas. After two outstanding seasons as the Heat's starting point guard and best overall player (at least going by statistics), he held out for nearly the first two months of this year while looking to become one of the NBA's highest paid point guards. Miami eventually signed him to a seven year \$16 million contract, matching the Lakers offer sheet to him, but then traded him to the Celtics on January 10 for Brian Shaw just six games into his return. In addition to not being in the greatest of shape when he arrived in Boston, Douglas was immediately forced to adjust to a vastly different role than he had with Miami and has had to contend with minutes that have fluctuated dramatically as players (particularly Dee Brown, a superstar in the making and the team's previously anointed point guard of the future) have returned from the injured list. To date, wearing the green, "The General" has averaged 18.2 minutes, 7.2 points and 3.9 assists while shooting .457 from the floor. Since Dee was inserted into the starting point guard spot four games ago, Douglas has temporarily moved ahead of John Bagley as the backup pointman, and is beginning to show signs of coming around. His most recent game — a 24-minute, 16-point, six assist effort in the C's decisive 117-100 win over the Clippers on March 6 — was easily his best as a Celtic. He is still, however, nowhere near where he wants to be as a contributing member of his new team, as he indicates below.

Celtics Pride: How frustrated have you been by your Celtics experiences to date?

Sherman Douglas: It's been real tough, but you have to be a man about it. For me, I have to adjust, even if it is rough. I have to understand what's going on. They're trying to get a chemistry going for the playoffs. I can wait until next year if I have to make a major dent, but I haven't given up on this year.

CP: Why is it that you think you've had difficulties here?

SD: A lot of things. The system's established here. A lot of guys have been coming in and going out. In Miami I was the first option, here I'm the fifth or sixth option, so that's been an adjustment too. I think I just have to wait to see what I can do when I get a training camp in. It was hard to come into things in the middle like I did. Hopefully next year it will be a little more clear.

CP: What do you feel you need to do to turn things around for yourself?

SD: I just have to go out and play ball. In past weeks, I think I got away from being aggressive with the ball and aggressive in general, and away from the things I've done in my career that have helped me be successful. I think I have to turn the tide and just

Ford in which you told him you'd understand if he benched you in favor of John Bagley and Dee Brown for the rest of the year. Can



Sherman: "I think I have to turn the tide and just get back to being aggressive."

CP: What are your goals for the rest of this season?

SD: I'm just trying to do whatever it will take to help the team win a championship. I came so close at Syracuse to winning it all. Being a part of a championship team is something I really want to experience. So, I just want to do what's best for the team as a whole.

CP: You were asked to do a lot in Miami, including a great deal of scoring. However, with all the scorers here, your role appears to be more as a set up man for others. Do you think you can adjust to the change?

SD: You have to. You have to do what's best for the team. You can't be selfish and say I did it another way before. If what the coach wants is best for the team, then you have to sacrifice some of your game. We've got enough people here who can score.

CP: Do you think your performance over the remaining six weeks of the regular season is important to your future in Boston?

SD: I can't worry about that. I'm not going to put all that pressure on myself. I just have to go out there and do what I do best.

CP: You recently initiated a conversation with Chris

you explain your thinking behind this proposal?

SD: I know it's been a tough situation for the coaches with three point guards. I just wanted to let them know that if they thought sitting me down was best for the team and gives us a better shot at the championship then I'd be willing to do it.

CP: Do you miss Miami at all?

SD: In some ways, but I like the challenge here. The situations are a lot different. In Miami, we were looking to the future for winning a championship — maybe in three or four

"I'm just trying to do whatever it will take to help the team win a championship."

— Sherman Douglas

years. Here, the future is today. We're playing for a championship now. It changes the way you approach things.

CP: You've played with some great players at the college and pro level, but has there been anything that's stood out about playing with Larry Bird?

SD: Yeah, he's definitely special. He's a great forward, but he really thinks like a guard. He sees the whole court and he's always a step ahead of the play. He makes all of his teammates better. And he's such a great shooter too.

THE COMPLETE VIDEO GUIDE TO BIRD WATCHING



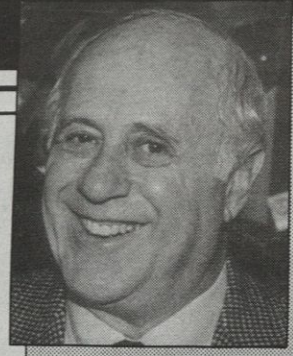
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By Red Auerbach

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you have a question for Red, please address your letters to Celtics Pride, 85 Old Long Ridge Road, Stamford, CT 06903.

Dear Red,

Now that it seems like the Big Three will be back healthy for the stretch run, do you see a problem with them adjusting to the uptempo game that most teams are going to?

Chuck Garvey,
Philadelphia, PA

Obviously we are pleased that it does look, for the most part, like Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish will be in there for the final phase of the regular season and the playoffs. Both Kevin and Larry have come back relatively strong, and as I've said, if we're healthy, we're a threat to win.

I think Chris Ford has done an excellent job in building an effective offensive style. What he's done is coach the younger players on the team to always be thinking the transition game, while giving the guys such as Larry, Kevin and Robert the responsibility for getting the ball off of the boards. Kevin still is an intimidating shot-blocker, Robert the same, and Larry one of the best defensive rebounders in the league. Offense is a very selective thing when it's going well; when you have the opportunity, you run. I've said Chris emphasizes rebounding and the halfcourt game with our Big Three, but you'll still see every one of those guys running if they see their own defender lagging back. Dee Brown and Sherman Douglas understand that if the opportunity to break is not there, then we will get into our halfcourt game. With our low post attack, we feel we are one of the best in the league at a slower tempo. Finally, we are helped by Chris' very shrewd judgment of

ASK RED

a game's pace. He's been able to judge accurately how much to rest each of the veteran superstars.

Dear Red,

First, thank you for the incredible leadership you've given the franchise through the years.

What I would like to know is how the decisions or trades are made. Is input from a "franchise player" such as Larry Bird taken into account when, for example, a player such as Sherman Douglas is acquired? Also, is a player's personality considered as well as his playing ability? Also, in an unrelated question, how was the surname Celtics decided upon for the team?

Finally, has the team lost its killer instinct over the past three or four years? Greg Parks
Brooks, ME

There are certainly a number of discussions when a player is acquired by the team. We have always prided ourselves on our chemistry throughout all of our championship teams and, yes, we have sought player input into making these decisions. One of the reasons we went out and tried very hard to get Dave Gavitt was that, in addition to being a strong executive, he is an outstanding communicator. He follows our tradition of staying on top of our players' thinking and all of us were high on Sherman Douglas when we traded for him. As regards Larry, he was sitting in my office when we acquired Bill Walton in 1985. That following season, Walton was a critical figure in our winning a title. While I was on the phone, Larry strongly supported our effort to get Bill. It's one of many examples — the point is we're always in touch with what our players are thinking. The name "Celtics" was determined by our first owner and my dear friend, Walter Brown, who believed that the Irish tradition attached to the name would fit well here in Boston. As well, the original Celtics were one of the sport's great early dynasties in the 1920s. Finally, we haven't lost our killer instinct. Injuries have hampered our drive more than anything in recent seasons.

I will say that you do have to guard against those problems, and this is why the draft — and trades — are so important.

Dear Red,

Why doesn't Chris Ford play Joe Kleine more often when it's known how he can perform and get the job done. He should be getting more money than he does now. I feel he would be a major contributor getting 20-25 minutes a game because of the effective way he's come off the bench to shut other teams' centers down when Robert Parish is resting. I also vote for starting Kevin McHale because of the way he's able to provide defensive intimidation. Thanks.

Elliott Driggs
Aurora, CO

Thank you for your letter. But I must honestly say at the start that I believe that, of anyone, it's Chris Ford who has the very best feel for his personnel and his work in developing a solid contender this season has been outstanding.

I think Joe Kleine has had a much improved year, too. He has much more confidence in his offense, and, defensively, he's never been more assertive in holding his position in the post. Allotting minutes is one of the most difficult things a coach has to do. I think the most challenging part of a coach's job is to motivate guys and make players' minutes quality minutes. Joe's role varies. Sometimes, in very competitive defense and transition type games, we need Kevin McHale as our center to backup Robert. This cuts into Joe's minutes. Also, you have to be careful not to play a player too many minutes. Finally, you have to be able to judge how many minutes a player should be out on the floor. There are situations where a player is asked to play more minutes than what is best for the team. The role of a player coming in off of the bench is not to play as if he's a superstar; rather, you want to play an opponent tough off of the bench, and hold the opposition even. When your starters return, those starters should be the players to really open things up.

The decision at present, for the most part, is to bring Kevin off of the bench, both because of his ability to spark the team offensively in that role and because of the reduced stress on his assorted injuries. However, conditions could change as the playoffs draw nearer.

Dear Red,

A few years ago the Celtics traded Sam Vincent to Seattle for a future draft pick. Whatever became of that pick?

Rick Dandridge
San Antonio, TX

We traded both Sam and Scott Wedman to the Seattle SuperSonics before the 1987-88 season in exchange for the second round draft choice in the 1989 draft. It was in the following draft that we acquired the draft rights to Brian Shaw, who in turn became our starting point guard for two seasons.

The specific draft choice we acquired in the Vincent-Wedman deal, however, was used differently. This choice was to be used during the season there was an expansion draft, as Miami entered the NBA that season. Therefore, we traded that choice to the Heat in order to protect an extra player on our roster in the expansion draft. Because we traded this choice to the Heat, we were allowed to protect nine players.

Dear Red,

There has been talk that the Celtics are thinking of trading one of the players off of the current roster, including, possibly, one of the Big Three, Kevin Gamble, Sherman Douglas or Ed Pinckney. Are you entertaining these thoughts?

Gary Di Napoli
Las Vegas, NV

We aren't. We have every intention of keeping our great veteran frontline of Larry Bird, Robert Parish and Kevin McHale. We have been pleased with the play of Sherman Douglas, a player we just traded for. He's been helped by getting regular minutes in a recently changed rotation.

Both Kevin and Eddie have become critical role players for us. It's very important to point out that, at times, it takes years for a player to develop and become comfortable with his role on a team. Eddie and Kevin have both matured and become great contributors for us in what are their fourth seasons for us here in Boston. •



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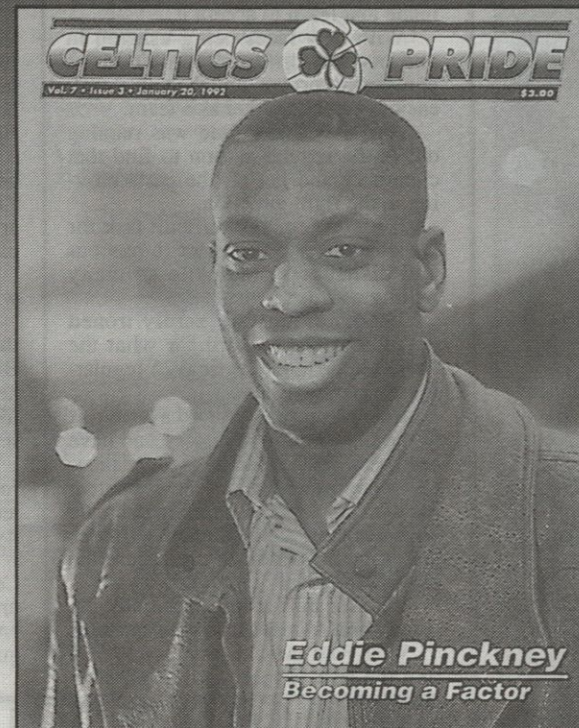
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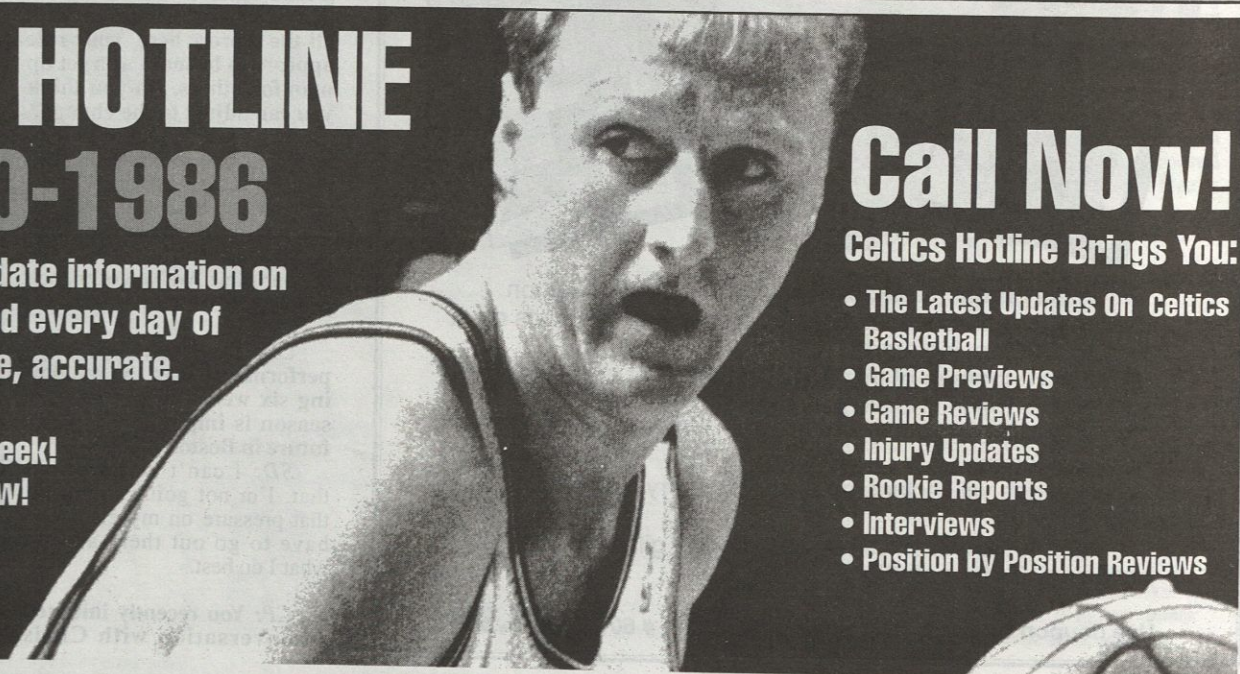
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Searching for an Elusive Chemistry

It Has Not Been Easy for the Celtics to Work as a Team

By Jim Bianchine

For the better part of 58 games, times surrounding the Boston Celtics were a lot like the state of the American economy.

They had a lot of skilled people, but like the country's jobless rate, there simply weren't enough positions to go around.

Without Larry Bird and Kevin McHale, the rest of the Celtics were searching for an elusive chemistry, not to mention cohesion on offense.

At times things became chaotic. They were a team in a state of perpetual confusion. No one seemed to know his job description and it was working on the psyche of everyone in the organization.

Nearly everyone cried out for a job description spelled out and each wanted to know the same about his teammates.

To a man they would be candid, searching for what it was that was expected of them in order to adjust to life in the NBA within a particular niche and learn to accept it.

With new faces being ushered in and out and different combinations constantly thrown together, it wasn't easy to come together as a team.

And they knew time was running out in the regular season to find that chemistry and get all the parts moving in the right direction.

It was an equally difficult task for the coaching staff to sort things out and distribute minutes to so many willing warriors.

Though things are hardly ironed out, the return of Bird for what the Celtics hope to be the final 25 regular-season games, is a start.

Role players have played a large part in the Celtics storied history and have been very much a part of its foundation.

Though there seems no substitute for winning with consistency to create cohesiveness, there remain wrinkles that must be smoothed out before the playoffs begin.

With logjams at most positions, the task at hand at times appears monumental.

What Ford and company have to do is find the best supporting cast possible

to surround the leading men and hopefully alleviate the frustration building inside many of the fringe players searching for direction.

Upon his return, Bird spoke out about the importance of a working system. "Finalizing a rotation is what it is all about. We're a shaky ballclub right now, there's no question about it. Hopefully we can get it together because everyone seems to be pretty healthy, so we have to go from there."

Likewise he was realistic about the state of affairs.

"You can't play 11 or 12 guys every night. You have to find a good rotation of 8 or 9 guys," he said.

Following the Celtics home win against Orlando in which the reserves played a prominent role as they have been of late, with nine players reaching double figures, Reggie Lewis remarked, "everyone's playing and everyone's happy."

However that was a specific case and it just isn't a perfect world every night.

"The thing we have to do is find the right mix. We've got some people who are good on offense and a little lacking on defense and the other way around too. We've just got to find the right combinations," admitted Ford.

He also realizes things can't always be in a constant state of euphoria. "There are only so many minutes to go around and I can't worry if some people get their nose out of joint," he said.

"The people that are playing hard will get time," he said.

Ford's plans suddenly headed in the right direction with the return of Bird, though with 25 games left when he came back, the Celtics had to feel like they were beginning the regular season for the second time.

"I think Larry can have a calming force, particularly in the fourth quarter of games. Larry can give us stability in those situations," he said.

Without Bird in those situations, the Celtics have had a history of coming unglued time and time again, experiencing a somewhat perennial fourth quarter demise, mostly on the road.

"It's nice to have the roster together,"

said Ford after the one and ONLY night all season that he had everyone available at the same time.

"But it's going to take us a while for us to get cohesive. The last couple weeks it sometimes looks like we don't know each other out there. What we have to do now is spend time together on the court and get the rotation worked out," he said.

The return of Bird means players have to be willing to readjust, hopefully for the betterment of the team and the quest for a common goal.

Kevin Gamble, who was one of the prime go-to-guys in the Birdless stretch, is one willing to accept change in order to win.

"A lot of times my offense is not going to be there. You have to find ways to help the team. I'm not going to get as many opportunities to shoot the ball, so I'm going to do things like run the floor, go for more steals and get more rebounds," he said.

Though veteran Robert Parish is one of the few who knows his job description to the letter, he realizes the return of Bird spells reorganization of the offense and at the same time resurgence.

"First of all we know Larry's not bashful about shooting the ball. We knew he was going to take his shots. But you saw the way his being out there opened up things up the middle and we had room," said Parish.

McHale, struggling to find his health and get back in the flow, realized the need for Bird, especially on the offensive end.

Following an ugly loss due to a fourth-quarter letdown in Atlanta, he said, "our offensive flow comes and goes and we settle for jump shots instead of trying to work it in towards the basket. That's where we really need Larry Bird."

Dee Brown may have had the toughest time of all. He missed 45 games, was thrust into a new role at off-guard and back into playing the point.

"Everybody on this team is still fitting into a role. This is really the first time I've played with Sherman Douglas and Bags (John Bagley) and right now it's a matter of us getting used to each other," he said.

Maybe the most unsettled spot for much of the season due to injuries and new faces has been the backcourt, at times like a revolving door.

Ford knows what Douglas is capable of from his days in Miami and is trying desperately to work him into the puzzle that seems to have more pieces than the blueprint calls for.

"We've got to give Sherman a chance to see if he can play. Then we'll go from there," said Ford.

For Douglas, the director of the offense with the Heat, the change to a new style and different surrounding cast has been difficult and frustrating.

"I have to understand what's going on. They're trying to get chemistry going for the playoffs."

I can wait until next year if I have to. This is no big surprise for me. It's tough for everyone to get minutes. It's hard to juggle 10 or 11 guys. The system is established here and I have to wait and see what I can do," he said.

Currently the man that gave the



Chris: "The people that are playing hard will get time."

Celtics direction in the backcourt and veteran stability finds himself longing for playing time and logging a string of DNP's.

But Bagley just seems to be biding his time and is ready when his number is called.

"I'll just see what happens. You've got to know your role and be ready at all times," he said.

The Celtics are rich at forward and Boston's come in all sizes. Ed Pinckney, whose Herculean role in the extended absence of Bird and McHale kept them afloat, is a true believer in defined roles, though his has to change with Bird and McHale back.

"Knowing your role is very important. Everybody has to realize his role. He has to know what is expected of him and what has to be done," he said.

He too realizes that the Celtics need punch off the bench to reach a true measure of success. "If we are going to improve, that's definitely where we are going to need it. What I can do is rebound. Before I was always in a situation of trying to get some playing time. And now (with Bird back) my role has changed," he said.

The first sign of improvement came against the Clippers when the bench, minus McHale, scored 50 points.

Another player who lives by the title "role-player" is Joe Kleine, who provides continual inspiration and insurance in the pivot, but too never knows when he is going to get the call, as Ford oftentimes opts to use McHale as the backup pivot.

Kleine jokes about being an insurance policy, recently calling himself "Lloyds of London." But he is serious about being ready even if minutes are few.

He also realizes how many players will have to be ready come playoff time, which is a far different animal than the regular season.

"In the playoffs everybody realizes a role and knows what has to be done. You may play a lot one night and not be used the next," he said.

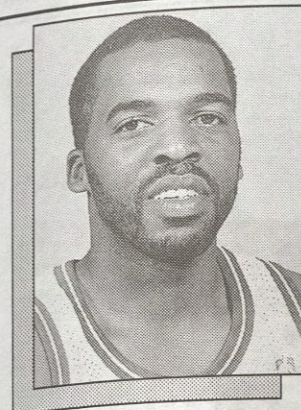
There is no question the return of Bird even further confuses the roles of many players, some seeing their minutes decline dramatically.

But the mark of a good team is to adjust and the mettle of a coach is tested to find the right way to utilize his troops. •

PERSPECTIVE

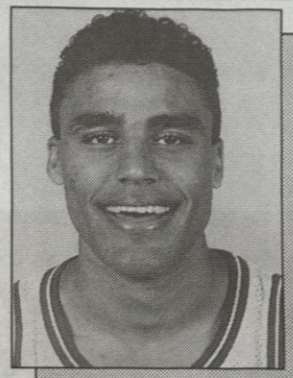
How Does a Player Handle Fluctuating Playing Time?

With all the comings and goings that have taken place in the Celtics rotation over the course of this season, the playing time for most of the players on the team have undergone several significant fluctuations to date. For the most part, these alterations have been handled well by the guys affected — they've stepped up with strong play when their numbers were called and they've continued to be good citizens when the minutes disappeared. Given the egos of today's professional athletes, the relative tranquility the Celtics have enjoyed in spite of everything that has happened this year has been somewhat fascinating. We here at *Celtics Pride* thought it would be interesting to try to unearth what it was about this group of players that have let them rise above the dramatic changes that have taken place upon them.



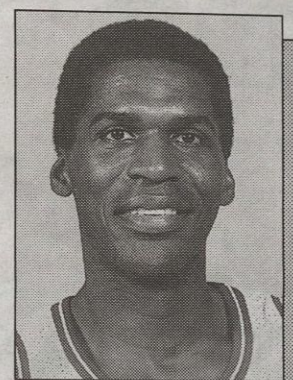
John Bagley

John Bagley — You've just got to stay ready at all times. In my case, I understand what's happened a little, but it doesn't make it any easier. But I see where they (coaches) are heading.



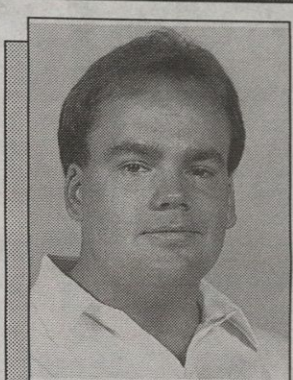
Rick Fox

Rick Fox — Having the mental toughness is vital. So is staying focussed while you're not playing. You have to pay attention to what's happening on the court while you're sitting on the bench, because I think you can stay in the flow of the game if you stay in it mentally.



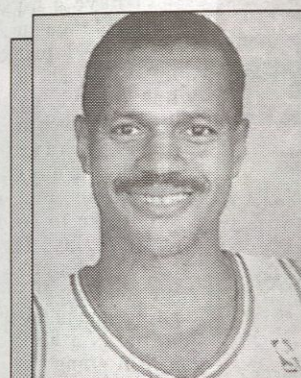
Robert Parish

Robert Parish — The key is you have to stay ready, because you never know when you might get the call, on this team especially, with all the guys we've had going in and out.



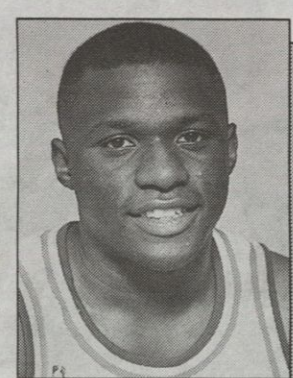
Jon Jennings

Jon Jennings — What a player has to do whether he's coming off the bench or starting, or playing 10 minutes or 30, is always stay mentally ready. A player has to approach each and every game as if he's going to play 48 minutes. He's got to know who he's going to be playing and what might be expected of him if he has to go into the game. A coach usually never knows how he's going to play someone on a particular evening, so the key is staying ready.



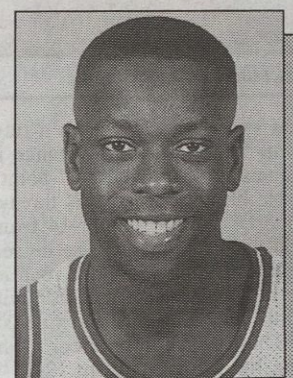
Rickey Green

Rickey Green — I've been around a long time, so I understand what they're trying to do right now. In my case, it's been tough because I really believe I can help this team, but I understand it and there's nothing I can do about it.



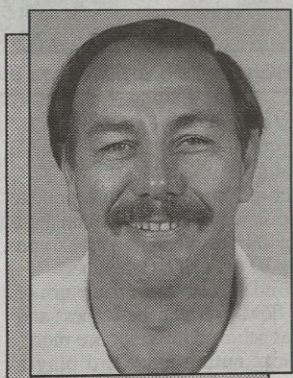
Sherman Douglas

Sherman Douglas — The key is just going in and performing well. If you perform well you'll get more minutes. It can be a hard situation sometimes, but you have to be prepared to come in and play aggressively.



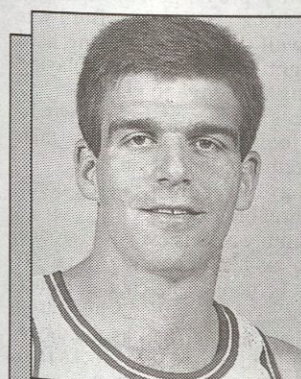
Eddie Pinckney

Eddie Pinckney — Being ready and prepared at all times. For most players, like me, the minutes are going to be up and down a little bit, so you've got to be constantly ready for anything.



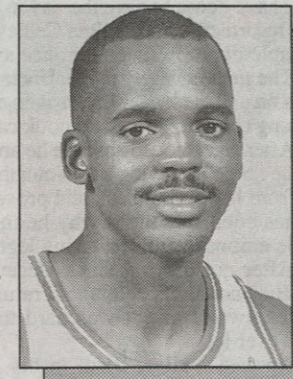
Chris Ford

Chris Ford — They've got a job to do. Minutes are a coach's decision. The players have to stay ready and be ready to go out there and do their job.



Joe Kleine

Joe Kleine — Staying in shape is important. So is not letting your ego get in the way of what's going on. You have to be prepared every night.



Kevin Gamble

Kevin Gamble — Go out there, play your game no matter how much time you're getting and stay aggressive. That's the key as far as I'm concerned.

1991-92 BOSTON CELTICS ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	Birthdate	College	Yrs Pro
5	John Bagley	G	6-0	205	4/23/60	Boston College	9
33	Larry Bird	F	6-9	220	12/7/56	Indiana State	12
7	Dee Brown	G	6-1	161	11/29/68	Jacksonville	1
4	Sherman Douglas	G	6-1	180	9/15/66	Syracuse	3
44	Rick Fox	G-F	6-7	231	7/24/69	North Carolina	R
34	Kevin Gamble	G-F	6-5	210	11/13/65	Iowa	4
13	Rickey Green	G	6-0	172	8/18/54	Michigan	13
53	Joe Kleine	C	7-0	271	1/4/62	Arkansas	6
35	Reggie Lewis	G-F	6-7	195	11/21/65	Northeastern	4
32	Kevin McHale	F-C	6-10	225	12/19/57	Minnesota	11
00	Robert Parish	C	7-1	230	8/30/53	Centenary	15
54	Ed Pinckney	F	6-9	215	3/27/63	Villanova	6
11	Stojko Vrankovic	C	7-2	260	1/22/64	Croatia	1

Head Coach: Chris Ford
Asst. Coaches: Don Casey, Jon Jennings
Trainer: Ed Lacerte

Chief Scout: Rick Weitzman
Scouts: M.L. Carr, John Kuester, Misho Ostarcevic, Dennis Johnson, Fordy Anderson

The Bird Flies Again

Larry is Back for the Stretch Run



Larry: "There's no place in the world where I feel more comfortable than on a basketball court."

By Jim Bianchine

There is a reason most Celtics fans have started humming the Mighty Mouse theme these days when they see Larry Bird.

The old script writer from Indiana may have come to save the day in Boston, resurrecting the lifeless Celtics into a viable playoff contender once again.

The man is hardly myth. His legend lives on and his legacy grows with every passing chapter of his storybook career.

After an extended absence he arrived on the scene following a two-month lay-off from his aching back and proved as he has countless times why he in fact is the embodiment of a living legend.

After not playing since December 30, Bird made his celebrated return to the hardwood and it was hard to tell he'd ever left.

Against Dallas, Bird, in his 13th NBA season, frolicked like a colt. The 35-year-old veteran of countless

NBA wars went out and scored 26 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and dished out nine assists.

But more importantly he renewed hope into a wayward team that had lost 10 of its previous 14 games and seemed to be on a ride to nowhere.

With Bird's return came the return of offensive flow, overall cohesiveness and a team that believed in itself once more.

The next outing saw Bird play a leading role in a second win against Orlando, scoring 17 points with 14 rebounds. But it was his unparalleled creativity that flourished as the Celtics placed nine players in double digits in the scoring column.

Some thought the lowly Mavs and last-place Magic were hardly measuring sticks. So in the third game of his miraculous return against a much-improved LA Clippers team, he led the green brigade once again.

Suddenly his mere presence renewed confidence team-wide. Against the Clippers Bird led the Celtics to their

third straight victory with a tidy 19-point, 7-rebound performance in 28 minutes in a convincing 17-point win.

He hit all three of his three-point launches and shot 8-for-14 from the field. In the next game he helped the Celtics break a five-game road losing streak with a win in Orlando with 15 points, nine rebounds and six assists.

The Celtics now seem a far cry from the team that went 12-17 without their spiritual leader.

"Larry's game is a special kind of basketball and it does become infectious with the other guys. It's that ball movement and the tone is set," said Boston coach Chris Ford.

With Bird, the Celtics enjoyed a crisp offensive flow not often seen in his absence. His creative kickouts, accurate outlets and sometimes unheralded defensive rebounding reestablished the Celtics dormant transition game.

But that's not all. His presence opened jump shots for his teammates and the ball movement necessary to get

to the basket for good shots found the Celtics flourishing in the paint as well.

Yet Bird hardly looks upon himself as a savior. "I thought like that earlier in my career. But we have enough talent here. We've got to get it all blended together. I'm just one part of a machine that makes it work a little bit smoother. I'm just trying to play well and help the other guys settle into their game. That's what it's all about," said Bird.

Bird tries as hard to be a private person as he does fighting in the trenches for a rebound. The last thing he worries about is the preservation of the legend title.

"I have a lot of confidence in my game. I just don't worry about what everybody says. I know I'm going to have some good days and some bad days. I like to go out and play. It (the legend stuff) is not that big of a deal. I came in this league as a hick and I'm going out a legend. That's not too bad," he said, laughing.

Most middle-aged guys with a sore back in his position would be home counting their money. Bird isn't most guys.

His will drives him to trudge onward. Retreat is not in his vocabulary as long as he can endure the rigors of the NBA.

He is candid about what keeps him going. "Well, it's the competition and I enjoy playing. The money's great and it's a good living. But I was playing well and I was playing hard before I got here when I was playing for nothing. I do love to play."

There's no place in the world where I feel more comfortable than on a basketball court," said Bird.

Few have ever had playing come more natural on it.

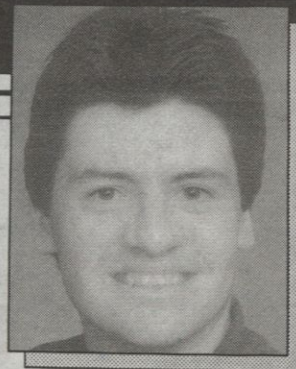
Bird simply affects everyone around him when his health permits him to do the things he does best. Though Father Time has taken its toll on his parts, his skills are as polished as the day a fresh-faced kid with golden locks first hit the Hub from Indiana State.

Continued on Page 19



Above photograph by Steve Lipofsky

Opposite photograph by Mike Moore



By Mike Spellman

With just 22 games and less than seven weeks remaining until the post-season gets underway, Chris Ford finally has his full team in tow and in relatively good physical condition.

What time he has remaining to work with, the head coach must see to it that the guys who've been out for extended periods until recently (Larry Bird, Kevin McHale, Dee Brown) are whipped into shape, try to minimize the disruption this will have to the existing team chemistry and determine the rotation he's going to use once the "real" season begins.

Arguably, at present anyway, no other NBA head coach has as difficult a job as Ford does. Clearly, none of his 26 counterparts have to deal with nearly as many tough personnel decisions, disparate parts, general uncertainties and high expectations.

Despite the abbreviated preparation time and tenuous status of the banged up, aged and irreplaceable Bird and McHale, the high expectations are maintained by a reasonable portion of the club's following who can't help but to be enamored of what could be if a lot of big "ifs" are resolved in the affirmative.

If Larry's back holds up, if Dee continues to improve and develop at the point, if Kevin's feet or ankles don't continue to transform into cheese, if Sherman Douglas can settle into a groove, if Robert Parish, Reggie Lewis, Kevin Gamble, Ed Pinckney and Rick Fox remain healthy and focussed, the Celtics, on the surface, appear as capable as any other team in the Eastern Conference of giving the Chicago Bulls a run for their money in May.

For now, however, Ford will be content to just look sharp against lower echelon teams, never mind contending with the seemingly unbeatable defending world champions, his lone goal at this time being to get his club playing by late April with the same degree of cohesiveness it was before being knocked off kilter, first, by the All-Star interruption and, second, by the returns of McHale and Brown.

As most of you no doubt recall, Boston rolled into the break winning seven of their final 10 games without Bird, McHale and Brown (except for an 11-minute cameo in the final game), and in their absences relied on Parish, Lewis and Gamble as the "go to guys" and on Pinckney, Fox, Douglas, Joe Kleine and John Bagley to fill important support roles. And though this unit's offensive arsenal was fairly limited, their united stand at the defensive end often proved enough of a difference. In fact, the team defense turned in during that stretch was quite possibly the finest of "The Bird Era."

With McHale and Brown back in action immediately following the break, the Celts dropped eight of 11, including only a single win in nine road games (avoiding the O-fer thanks only to a meeting with the even more

hapless Lakers), during which time Ford sacrificed the momentum his team had been building in order to accelerate the reorientation and conditioning of his two returning stars.

Then Bird comes back after a two month-28 game absence to probably assure another whole chapter in his eventual complete basketball biography with an awe-inspiring 34-minute, 26 point, 13 rebound, nine assist performance to carry the C's to a 101-91 win over the lowly Dallas Mavericks, and, for one afternoon, everything appears peachy in Celtic land.

Boston then reeled off two more impressive wins at home — 125-100 over Orlando and a 117-100 besting of the L.A. Clippers with the rejuvenated Larry leading the way in both — to wrap things up at this writing on a high note...well, sort of. Kevin McHale sat out both of these lambastings with tightness in his oft-troubled left ankle. The last word from the team's medical people was that this latest flare up was nothing serious and that the low post demon was considered "day to day". However, realizing Kevin's recent history, we can probably assign this same status to the likelihood of another setback.

Before he went down for the third time in what has essentially to date been a lost season, McHale had appeared in 11 straight games since the break and had arguably played his most fluid and effective ball of the campaign in the final three or four contests. So, if he does return as we've been led to believe he will for the March 8 date (just seven days after his last game) with the Magic in Orlando, and if he can stave off the injury bug long enough, it will probably take only a game or two for him to get back to that level.

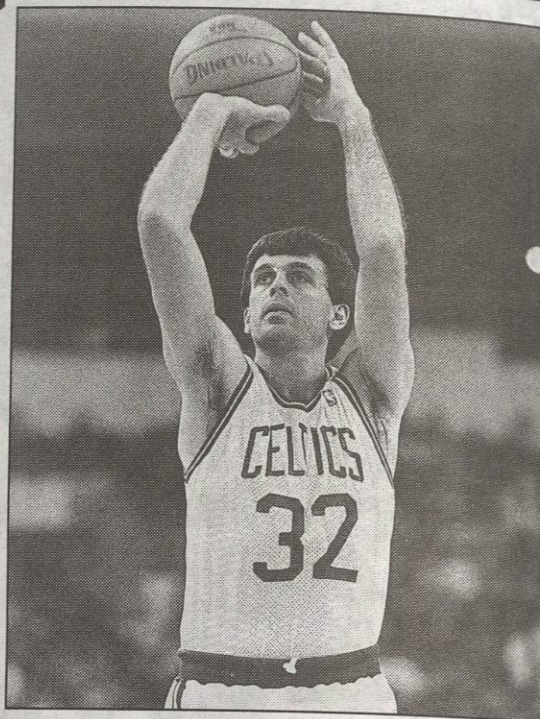
The encouraging news continues with Bird, as already noted. Though steadily slowed by age and injury over the last six years, Larry is still this team's undisputed leader and most important player. You need only to have watched the last three games to confirm this fact. His passing and outside shooting are irreplaceable in the halfcourt game, as are his defensive rebounding and telepathic outlets to the up-tempo attack.

Of course, it goes without saying that any further serious physical setback to either McHale or Bird at this stage of the game will probably kill whatever hope there is of a big post-season run. It also goes without saying that, given the respective medical histories of the two thirty-something frontcourt players, these are anxiety filled days for anyone with an interest in the success of the Celtics.

Another unsavory possibility Ford has to contend with is that Dee, back from the ligament tear in his left knee that put him on the shelf for the first three months and change of the season, may require more time than there is remaining in this season to get back to the level of dominance he displayed in last year's play-offs and the pre-season.

NOTHING BUT NET

FORD UNDER THE GUN



McHale appears to be playing his most fluid and effective ball of the year.

Although the knee, by all accounts and appearances, is restored 100 percent to its original explosiveness, his full game is clearly going to take a while longer to return. Not surprisingly, many who follow the team are beginning to wonder why, especially when they're simultaneously watching what are by comparison the speedy reacclimations of Larry and Kevin.

Maybe you're intent on worrying about this. If that's the case fine, but be advised that those closest to the scene don't seem the least bit concerned, and here's just a few of the reasons why. First off, we've got to bare in mind that, very much unlike Bird and McHale, returning from an injury is not something to which Dee is accustomed. In fact, tearing the lateral meniscus ligament in his knee served as his introduction to the world off physical inactivity.

Another huge advantage the two returning veterans have over the second year player is a firm grasp of their roles. Brown, a relative neophyte at the point, isn't even close. Though we tend to forget it, he has only one year of professional basketball under his belt, and that comes after playing his college ball at one of the smaller schools (Jacksonville) in a small conference (Sun Belt), where he saw the majority of his time at small forward and shooting guard. To say the least, the leap in just one season from an all-purpose Jacksonville Dolphin to starting point guard for the Boston Celtics is immense — for anyone, no matter how capable they might be, there is going to be a considerable period necessary for the adjustment. Right now, Dee is an exceptionally gifted and intelligent kid with very good ballhandling and passing skills. In time, he will almost assuredly develop into a premier floor leader. How far along will he be by the end of the regular season? There's no way of knowing. But relax folks, it's still safe to presume that the kid is riding a one way ticket to superstardom.

There, now that I've gotten that off my chest, I guess I better get back to the original purpose behind this little dissertation.

As alluded in several places above, that quaint little 8-man rotation of late January has been torn asunder with the returns of Messieurs Bird, McHale and Brown — who, if healthy, collectively stand to receive over 40 percent of the 240 minutes Ford has to divy up. Based on the pattern Ford has been

employing of late, it also seems a pretty good guess that Lewis, Gamble and Parish are each going to be on the floor a good deal more than they're off it.

Traditionally, the coaches of play-off bound teams work towards honing an eight or nine man rotation during the regular season stretch run. To no surprise, Ford seems to be gravitating towards using nine guys regularly. And though the C's as they are presently constituted seem to go 11 deep pretty painlessly, it doesn't appear that the head coach will go as high as even a 10 player rotation, as the six guys mentioned in the previous paragraph will probably get approximately 85 percent of the available time.

With the need to tighten the defensive vise every now and then, Pinckney and Fox will probably be good for between 10 to 20 minutes per play-off game. The ninth slot in the pattern will, of course, go to whoever Ford selects to back up Brown at the point. This role is presently being filled capably by Douglas, who has at the time of this writing just played his best back-to-back games as a Celtic and appears to be finally finding a niche he can be comfortable with here. However, should he return to the doldrums of his first two months wearing the green, Ford has already let it be known that he won't hesitate to turn back to the unspectacular but reliable Bagley, his starting point man in 51 of the team's first 53 games, who, even with the godsend of a year Pinckney has had, if he doesn't win "The Sixth Star Award" by a landslide, will prove that Celtics fans have no sense of justice.

And, providing the big 9 are fit for post-season duty, it will be just as painful to see Kleine not getting off the bench except to cheer his mates on (a category he'd probably still lead the team in if he were playing 30 minutes per game). However, some comfort can at least be taken by him and his legion of loyal backers in the fact that management never added the extra power forward for insurance many guessed they would, indicating with this non-action that they would be reasonably comfortable filling Joe in there as well as at center. ●

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Here's How You Can Win a Chance to Photograph a Game from Courtside All you have to do is send us your best sports-oriented photograph and you could be a winner. Four lucky first place finishers will receive press credentials to photograph a Celtics game in Boston Garden from the best seats in the house!

Additionally, the following prizes will be awarded to first place finishers:

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 - * Kodak film
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 - * A complimentary one-year subscription to *Celtics Pride*
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1. The Kodak/Celtics Pride Photo Contest is open to amateur photographers only.
2. Black and white and color photographs are eligible.

3. Prints and slides will be accepted.
4. Photographs must have a sports-oriented theme. They do not necessarily have to be basketball related.
5. Any number of photographs may be entered. Contestant's name, address and telephone number must be clearly legible on the back of each print and/or accompany each slide.
6. Mail or hand deliver entries to:
KODAK/CELTICS PRIDE PHOTO CONTEST
c/o The Boston Celtics
151 Merrimac Street
Boston MA 02114
7. Entries will not be eligible after April 1, 1992.
8. Entries will be available for pick-up at above address. Entries will be returned by mail if they are submitted with a self-addressed stamped envelope. ALL UNCLAIMED ENTRIES WILL NOT BE RETAINED.
9. A total of four 1st place, four 2nd place and four 3rd place finishers will be selected and notified by mail.
10. Kodak and Celtics Pride do not assume responsibility for transportation to or from games at Boston Garden for 1st place winners.

BOSTON CELTICS TEAM STATISTICS

AS OF 3/10/92

PLAYER	G	MIN	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	3FG	3FGA	ORB	REB	AST	STL	TO	BLK	PT	PPA	PPG
Bird	32	1158	258	545	.473	107	115	.930	39	88	34	311	200	28	88	23	57	662	20.7
Lewis	61	2243	512	1032	.496	216	252	.857	4	19	80	280	126	91	110	78	190	1244	20.4
Parish	58	1693	358	684	.539	137	183	.749	0	0	163	517	67	53	107	88	128	853	14.7
Gamble	61	1843	347	682	.509	114	129	.884	8	21	65	215	172	57	74	30	153	814	13.3
McHale	35	809	195	397	.491	62	79	.785	0	11	74	201	46	6	46	32	68	462	12.9
Brown	18	409	71	183	.388	41	53	.774	2	12	9	44	75	16	23	2	30	189	11.6
Fox	61	1260	216	465	.462	120	157	.764	20	56	61	184	90	71	96	27	182	570	9.3
Pinckney	60	1484	151	283	.534	173	208	.832	0	1	200	445	45	54	54	48	123	475	7.9
Bagley	54	1341	164	381	.430	56	72	.778	7	30	29	121	348	40	115	3	104	391	7.2
Douglas	32	587	85	189	.450	57	81	.704	1	5	10	44	127	16	52	9	60	228	7.1
Kleine	54	815	121	240	.504	30	43	.698	4	6	78	235	28	19	18	10	80	276	5.1
Vrankovic	18	97	12	26	.462	5	9	.667	0	0	7	24	5	0	9	18	22	30	1.9

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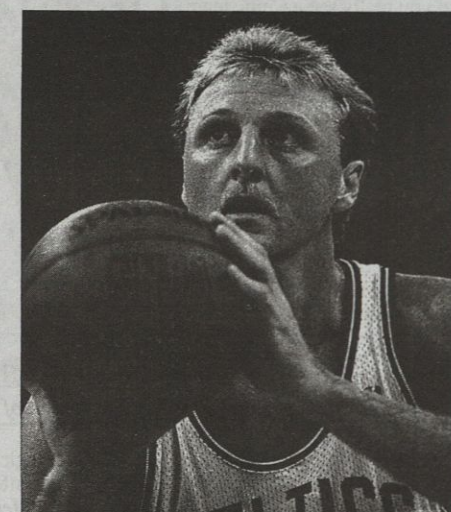
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By Bob Schron

GAME PLAN IN SHAPE. Chris Ford, Jan Volk, Dave Gavitt and Red Auerbach could have done well without all of the injury-enforced absences, thank you, but overall the Celtics' regular season game plan apparently is working and on schedule. From the moment they were defeated in Game Six in the Auburn Palace last season by Isiah Thomas and the Detroit Pistons, and Ford adamantly affirmed the Big Three would return as a unit for the present year, it was fully known that the C's would once again have to ration quality playing time for Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish. The brass didn't anticipate the injury to Dee Brown in pre-season, nor did they expect (necessarily) to have to barter Brian Shaw. Yet, with all of the talk aimed at promoting the importance of the regular season, this has always been a franchise that lives to win the playoffs. Sixteen of Red's Green and White banners attest to this mindset.

So, now, as they headed into the final fifteen games of the season, the team appears to be back and substantial. Bird and McHale have played well the past two weeks and the critical, hard choice Ford forged in naming Brown his starting point guard and Sherman Douglas his backup has structured the team as both explosive and, again, built to run. And, as Larry Brown pointed out when the C's trounced his Clippers, 117-100, because of the six week (circa) absence of Bird and McHale, players such as Kevin Gamble, Joe Kleine and especially Ed Pinckney have taken their game to another plateau. Larry Brown used the term "quality" minutes for these reserves and added "The reserves saw an opportunity to make an impact, and you really see a Celtic team now with depth, and a team that passes the ball expertly among nine players."

According to Ford, Bird's return has added a "feeling of stability" among the rest of the group, and doesn't it all ring hollow now that there was a concern that there would have to be an "adjustment" period of the team back to Bird when he returned? The major problem the team conceivably may have concerning the great Bird is if (a) he's again out indefinitely or (b) the situation arises where he's uncertain every other game as he was in the playoffs last season. Otherwise, as in the case of Magic Johnson, there is no period of re-orientation to Bird. From day one as a player here in his rookie season, he made the team around him better. It continues to the present. Auerbach's contention therefore is true: "If the team is healthy," he said in his column in this magazine earlier this season, "we have a legitimate shot at winning."

NOTES: Eddie Pinckney and John Bagley, two former Big East players, were directly affected by the return of formerly injured stars. As Bird's and McHale's returns neared, Tom Heinsohn watched as Pinckney certified himself (along with Dennis Rodman and Kevin Willis) as one of the most aggressive rebounding forwards in the league and Heinsohn said, "Pinckney is playing as hard as he is because he wants playing time when Bird and McHale come back." Pinckney is surprisingly insecure off of the bench despite his great play this season (7.3 rebs in 24 mpg). "I don't think I'm guaranteed any playing time whatsoever," he said the first week of March, at practice.

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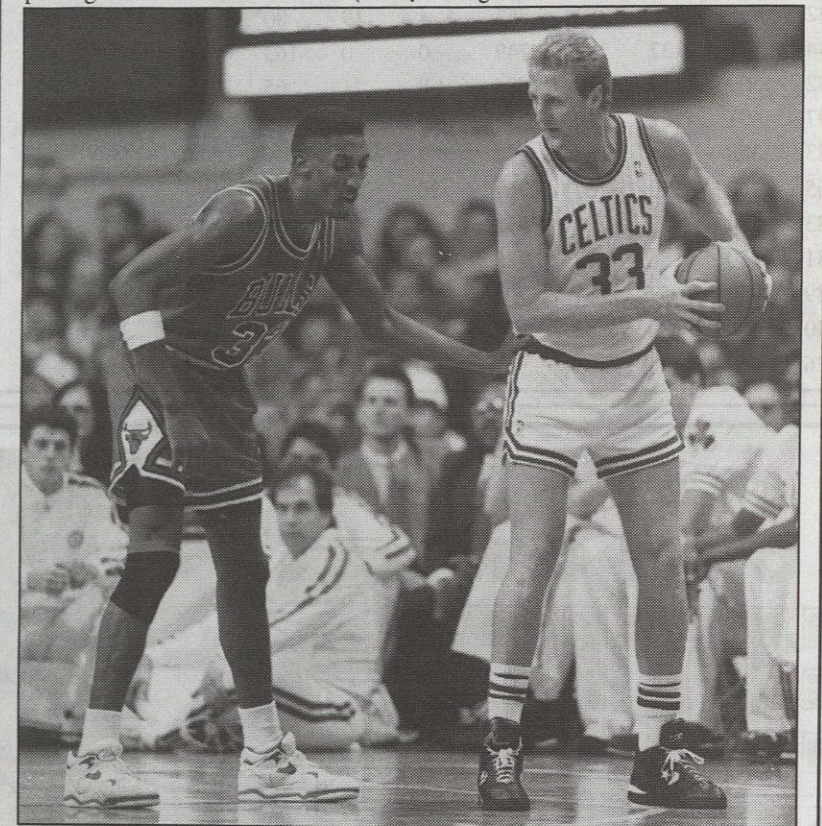


A FEELING OF STABILITY

"When Larry and Kevin come back, it will just be very, very hard for me to get regular minutes again." Asked if Pinckney should feel this pessimistic regarding opportunities to play, Ford shrugged, laughed ironically and replied, "You have to ask Eddie about that." Ford — always the taskmaster, the motivator... Bagley, meanwhile, was benched as the team aspired to create limitless minutes in order for the potential superstar talents of Brown to unfold. Bagley, whose surprisingly fine play this season identified him as the team's best point guard as Brown rehabbed (for

report in *The Boston Globe* in February, had said he was puzzled by his spot in the rotation, uncertain about both quantity of minutes and when he would play. He qualified that in the first week of March: "I was uncertain, but now I feel good about it because I think I've

shouting support for the backup point guard's passes and shots, and standing and clapping for Douglas when he's (Bird's) out of the game and on the bench... Douglas on the difference between the Celtics and the Heat: "The Heat had better athletes, but the Celtics are better players."... Rick Fox, in a



The return of Bird has raised the confidence level of the team.

instance: Bagley beat out Brian Shaw before the latter's trade), said of the benching, "I feel bad, but I understand the team's thinking and I understand the business. I'm not what you'd call 'happy,' but it's something I think I can deal with."... Bagley has received strong support from teammates during this period... Meanwhile, the strategy was to bring the emotional Douglas off of the bench behind Dee; the regularity of minutes helps Sherman somewhat, but not altogether. "It's been tough," Douglas said. "I'm trying to finally get in shape and I'm trying to learn a number of new moves from a whole new bunch of guys. I'm trying to play aggressively, to push the ball up the floor on a consistent basis."

"But it hasn't been perfect. I formerly was the man to run the ballclub. I didn't come here to sit on the bench."

Bird is making a special effort to display support for Douglas, always

seen it all when it comes to playing time. I've played thirty minutes, and as low as six. It was a worry, because after playing thirty (or twenty), my time was suddenly as low as six minutes during the western swing."... Fox thought the moves Ford made regarding Brown and Douglas were positive because of the confidence it gave Brown: "Dee had it in his mind all summer that he would be the starter at point guard. I think it was important for Chris to get him back in the starting lineup in order to get Dee back on track."... The respected power forward of the Magic, Terry Catledge, on the Celtic's chances: "I think they're a very good team with Larry back," Catledge said, "But in order for a team to win in the playoffs, they need eight or nine solid players. I see only five or six (solid players) on the Celtics right now."... Bill Walton, CBS commentator, recalled that when he was with the Celtics, he made a trip

1991-92 BOSTON CELTICS SCHEDULE

March 1992

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 DAL	2	3	4 ORL	5	6 LAC	7
8 ORL	9	10 MIA	11 CHI	12	13* NJ	14
15 POR	16	17 MIL	18 CLE	19	20 DET	21
22 GS	23	24	25 NJ	26	27 DET	28
29 ATL	30	31				

April 1992

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 WAS	2	3 IND	4
5 CHI	6	7 CLE	8 NY	9	10 MIL	11
12 CHA	13	14 PHI	15	16	17	18
19 MIA	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Home games are shaded. * Denotes a home game in Hartford, CT. All games on WEEI (590 AM) Radio. All times are local times, and all are PM.

to French Lick with Bird and Quinn Buckner (first they had stopped in Bloomington and tried to get together with Buckner's college coach, Bobby Knight). Walton, who always idolized Bird when the two played together here, went on, recalling that when he arrived in Bird's hometown, he took some of the gravel off of Bird's outdoor court and put it in his pocket. "I took the gravel and mixed it with my own in Le Mesa (CA). I wanted some of Larry's home earth to mix with mine... Larry's soil from Indiana certainly improved my own."... Walton on his years with the Celtics in an aside: "I loved my years in Boston and I loved winning a championship (1986). But I think the fans remember me more for not having played more." Walton missed most of both of his final two seasons here after that title-winning season in '86... Kevin Gamble acknowledged teams are beginning to play him to go to his left, the direction he prefers to move before spotting up for his jump shot. "That is my move," he admitted. "Teams know it, now I have to make the adjustment. But I think I'm getting improved shots off of the transition, with Bird back."... With the Celtics poised to meet Miami and Brian Shaw for the first time, Shaw commented that "for some reason, I never felt as if it would ever work out for me in Boston. Certain guys are meant to stay (in Boston), and others aren't. I wasn't one of the ones who was destined to stay."... Robert Parish told Peter May in *The Globe*: "I felt it was a mistake to trade Brian, even though we got a good player in return. I thought we had a great group of guards. But management thought otherwise... I thought he may have been traded too quickly, for whatever my opinion is worth. This was someone who had never been hurt and then got a rash of injuries. It was hard for him." •

Bird Cover Story

Continued from page 14

For Bird, the two months off were nothing but a rest and hardly enough time to collect any cobwebs.

"You don't forget how to play. You just have to get it all going at the right time," he said.

As far as the Celtics are concerned, he has it going in the nick of time.

Of his sterling return performance against Dallas in his first game of the new year, Bird said, "I was lucky the other night, there's no question about it. It's not that easy. I didn't know how I was going to play. I sort of prepared myself to play a pretty good game," he said, making light of the impressive performance.

The lack of rust was no coincidence. In the quiet times and private hours away from the game, Bird worked hard to maintain his edge as best he could while trying to rest and recuperate.

"I've been practicing pretty hard and doing a lot of shooting. Once I

got in the flow, I felt like I hadn't been out," said Bird.

Once he got into the fray, he felt right at home.

"I was bumping and banging and got some rebounds. My job is to get the defensive rebound and get it out as quickly as I can," said Bird.

What Bird gave the Celtics is a much-needed director on their fastbreak. "The key is to push it all the time. The ball doesn't always have to be in the hands of the point guard. He can't always just try to do it himself," said Bird who took the pressure off the guards and started upcourt after snaring the rebound, looking to make things happen.

After the win over Dallas Bird, candid as always made an assessment, calling the Celtics a "shaky team."

Following the Orlando win he upgraded the prognosis to the team being on "an upward swing."

He also spoke frankly of his perceived role. "My job is to rebound and score around 20 points a game, not 30 or 40 — just even things out."

"I'm pretty happy. We'll just see

where we go from here. Usually when you sit out that long you get a little rusty and things don't go your way. So I've anticipated that and things have been going pretty well," said Bird who has yet to need the oil can.

Bird, a typical Indiana product, takes his living with a deadly seriousness. "This is my job. I want to perform as well as I possibly can. I haven't had that much good luck the last two or three years, though I was very fortunate the first 10 years not to have a major injury."

You've got to take the good with the bad and I do. I have a lot of desire to play," he said.

Bird's true desire is to play every second of the game if his body would allow the willing spirit to.

"I want to play every minute. That's what they pay me for. Basketball has been with me a long time, longer than my wife and child," he said, speaking about the game he loves with a certain reverence.

When Bird laces his sneakers, he only knows one way to play the game

despite injuries.

"I just play and sort of worry after. I don't worry about anything until it happens. I thought about things like that (injuries) last year in the playoffs, but not this year. I struggled in the playoffs, but I'm not thinking about it this year," said Bird, who has other things on his mind, like leading the lost sheep and giving them direction.

But he has a realistic side despite being brought up in a place where basketball is a religion.

"I want to play whenever I feel I can play and when I'm capable of playing. The coach will dictate how many minutes I play."

Then turning to typical Bird, he said, "I'm here to play 48, that's what I get paid to do. If he says 20 or 40, whatever, that's what I'll do."

What Bird does with his minutes, long or short, is create, with the extra pass, the no-look bullet, or draw the defense with one of his many ball fakes.

What his presence gives the Celtics is the ability to allow teammates to go one-on-one as foes dare not double-team others when Bird is on the floor.

His three-point shooting allows the offense to open up and the opposition can no longer pack in its defense as it has been.

Bird is the word around the league once again and everyone notices.

"Larry gives them a different dimension, no question about it. He is such a terrific all-around player that can not only score when he needs to but also gives scoring opportunities to their people. His type of play is contagious," said Orlando coach Matt Guokas.

Dallas guard Derek Harper got more than his fill of Bird after the Celtics avenged a bitter loss in Dallas with a homecourt win over the Mavs.

"He's Larry and what he does best is make everybody else better. When you're moving the ball and looking for the extra shots, that's playing good basketball and that's what they were doing with him back."

"This is a different team than the one we beat in Dallas because they have Larry Bird and he makes them better because of his shooting and passing. Put him in there with McHale and Parish and you have a great team," said the mavs' Rolando Blackman.

Aside from what he gives them on the court, Bird's overall value to the team is immeasurable. His play is motivating and his presence gives the Celtics a measure of their old respect.

Though the Celtics are a team that has little choice but to lean on his fragile back, their foundation is steadied by his iron will.

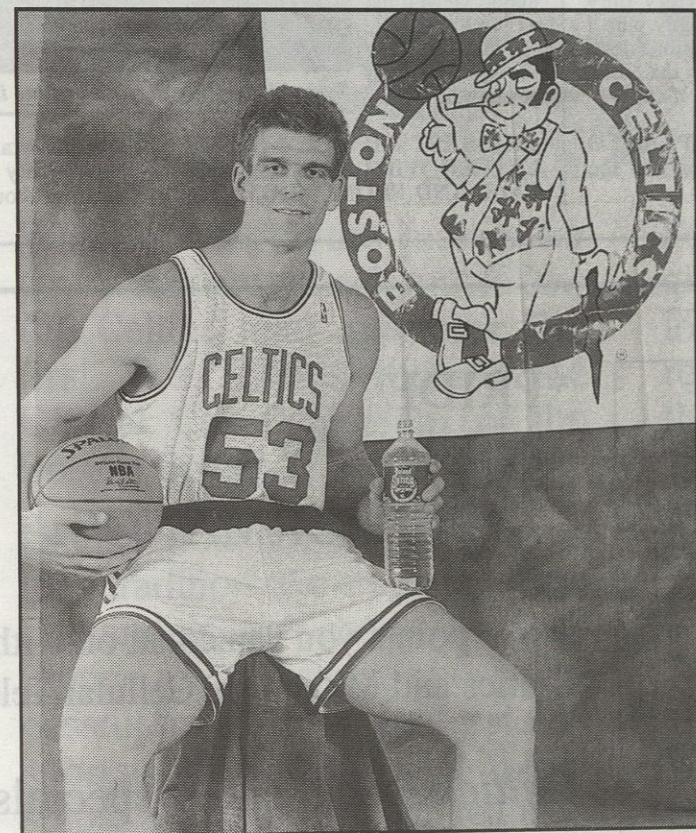
Longtime teammate Robert Parish isn't worried about his old pal shying away from anything or changing his game for an injury.

"He has the mental toughness to play through pain," said the Chief, who already is back to his old tricks, scoring off Bird feeds on the famed pick-and-roll that has yet to be stopped over the years.

Bird's game has never been a mystery, though at times he has. He is frank, but chooses his words carefully as he does those he confides in, seeking to be as private as a superstar can be, if it is possible.

"I want to live my life very quietly. You can get caught up in all that (star) stuff. One thing I never forgot is what got me here and it was hard work and dedication. I want to keep it as simple as I can and live a normal life," said Bird, hardly your normal player. •

Joe Kleine enjoys Poland Spring at home and at courtside.



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Preferred by the Boston Celtics

TOM "SATCH" SANDERS

AGE: 53

RESIDENCE: Stamford, CT

FAMILY: Wife, Virginia Smithers-Sanders and a daughter, Simone Sanders.

OCCUPATION: I'm the Vice President of Player Programs in the NBA. My department helps players make the transition from college to the NBA. We also help players to adjust to life after basketball. We help players, who are going in either direction, make adjustments to prepare for this new challenge in their lives.

HOMETOWN/HIGH SCHOOL/ COLLEGE: I'm from New York City and I went to Seward Park High School on the lower east side of New York and New York University.

NBA EXPERIENCE: "Satch" played for the Celtics from 1960-61 through 1972-73. His entire 13-year NBA career was spent in Boston. He was a member of nine World Championship teams, including six in a row. "Satch" will always be known as a fierce defensive player and rebounder coming off the bench for the Celtics. "Satch" would usually be assigned to an opposing team's best player. He was considered the league's best defensive player. "Satch" was also a head coach of the Celtics for parts of the 1977-78 and 78-79 seasons, compiling a 23-39 record.

YESTERDAY'S

HEROES

MOST MEMORABLE GAME: The very first NBA game that I played in back in 1960, against the Detroit Pistons will always be my most memorable game.

PROUDEST MOMENT AS A CELTIC: It's really hard to pinpoint one moment, because I never had a bad day as a Celtic.

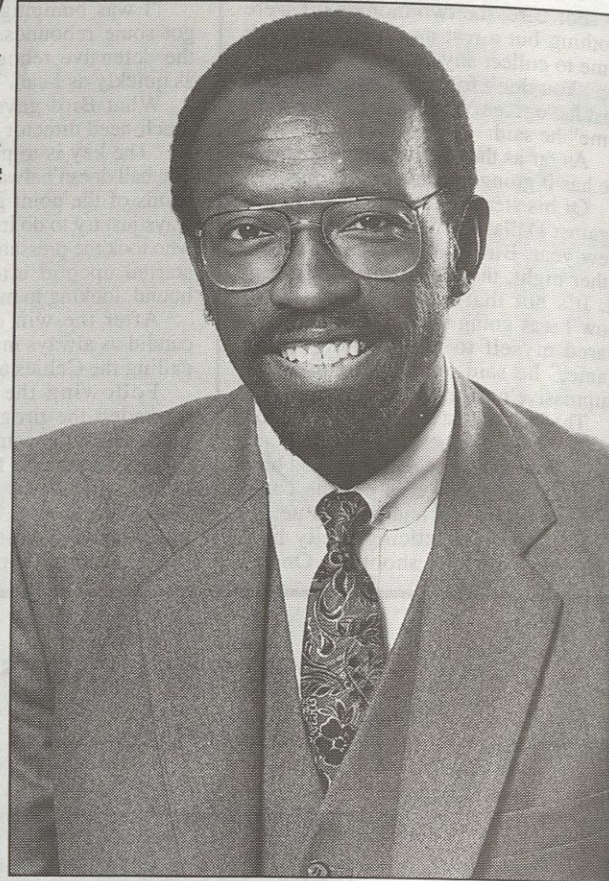
MOST DISAPPOINTING MOMENT AS A CELTIC: It had to be the season we didn't make the playoffs (1969-70), the year after Russell left. It was disappointing to not be in a position to do as well as we had done before.

MOST UNDERRATED PLAYER THAT YOU PLAYED WITH AS A CELTIC: That's hard to answer, because I feel most of the guys I played with received the notoriety they deserved. There was one guy who I played with that had superior talent, but never made his mark in the NBA, his name was Elbert (Al) Butler.

BEST PLAYER YOU PLAYED AGAINST: Elgin Baylor was the best. He was the man.

"SATCH" PLAYED HIS ROLE TO PERFECTION

Jones reminded me of the fact that we would not be playing this game forever. It was a time when my career



Tom: "Hopefully they viewed me in a positive light."

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED AS A CELTIC: This is tough, because I've never really thought about it. I guess I would base it on how the public viewed me at that time. Hopefully they viewed me in a positive light.

THE BEST ADVICE YOU RECEIVED WHILE IN BASKETBALL AND FROM WHOM: K.C.

was just starting, but he put in the back of my mind what I should be thinking about after basketball. ●

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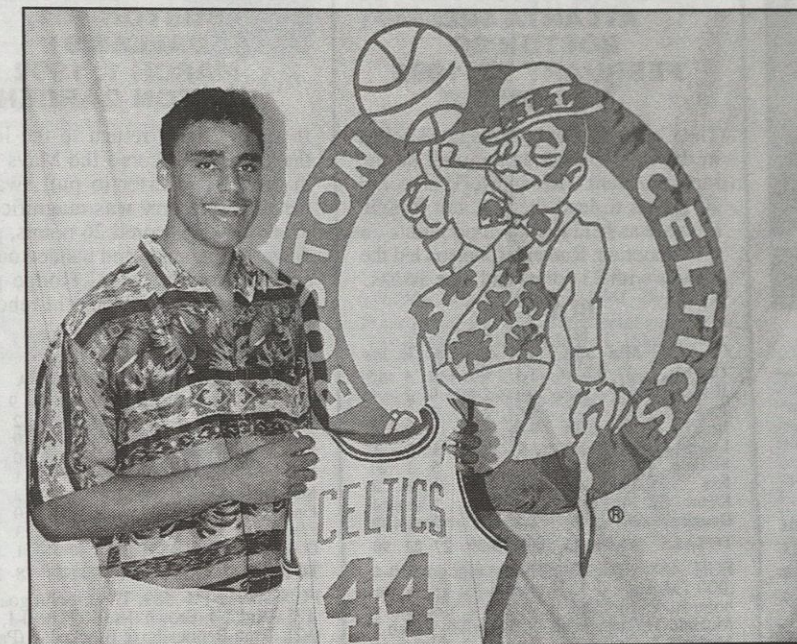


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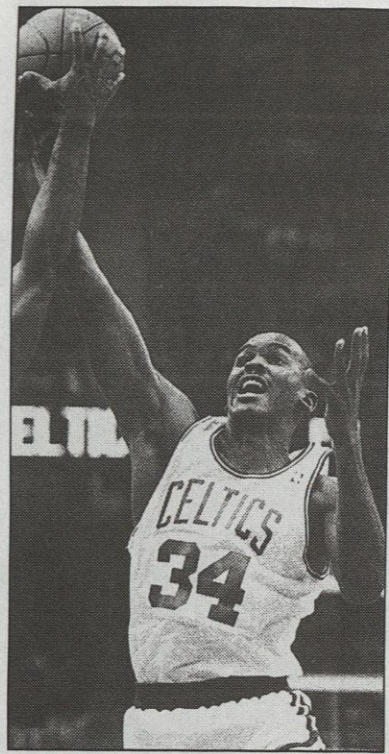
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Gamble poured in 25 during the rout over Indiana.

BOSTON 130, INDIANA 109 FEBRUARY 26, 1992 BOSTON GARDEN

The Celtics exploded for a 17-point lead after one quarter and never looked back. Seven players scored in double figures. Kevin Gamble led the barrage with 25 points. Dee Brown, Rick Fox and Kevin McHale combined for 49 points off the bench.

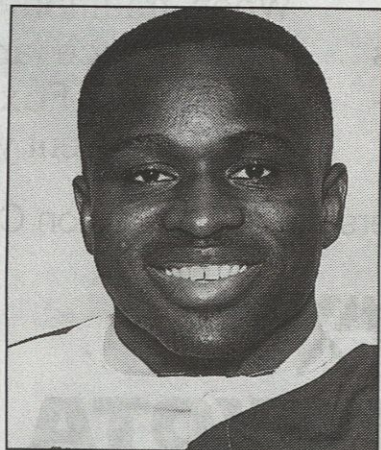
BOSTON												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F
Gamble	40	11-18	3-4	1-5	4	25	Parish	37	3-7	6-6	5-10	0
Pinckney	37	3-7	6-6	5-10	0	3	Bagley	19	1-6	0-0	0-1	4
Parish	25	5-7	5-6	3-6	4	15	Lewis	25	6-11	2-2	0-4	1
Bagley	19	1-6	0-0	0-1	4	2	Brown	24	7-15	6-6	0-2	4
Lewis	25	6-11	2-2	0-4	1	14	Fox	23	5-9	0-0	1-2	6
Brown	24	7-15	6-6	0-2	4	21	McHale	21	7-9	4-4	1-4	3
Fox	23	5-9	0-0	1-2	6	10	Douglas	10	1-3	2-2	0-0	3
McHale	21	7-9	4-4	1-4	4	18	Kleine	12	3-9	0-0	1-4	0
Douglas	10	1-3	2-2	0-0	3	4	Vrankovic	4	1-1	0-0	0-2	2
Kleine	12	3-9	0-0	1-4	0	7	TOTALS 240 50-95 28-30 12-40 32 26 130					
Vrankovic	4	1-1	0-0	0-2	2	2	FG% .526; FT% .933; Three-point goals 2-2, 1,000 (Brown 1-1, Kleine 1-1); Team Rebounds: 3; Blocked: 10 (McHale 4, Lewis 2, Pinckney 2, Fox 1, Vrankovic 1); Turnovers: 11 (Bagley 3, Douglas 2, Lewis 2, Brown 1, Kleine 1, Parish 1, Pinckney 1); Steals: 18 (Pinckney 7, Fox 4, Brown 2, Kleine 2, Bagley 1, Gamble 1, Parish 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.					

INDIANA

Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts
Thompson	37	0-3	0-0	2-6	1	2
Person	35	7-15	0-1	1-4	3	17
Dreiling	12	1-4	0-0	0-0	2	2
M. Williams	40	7-12	9-10	1-1	2	23
Miller	28	5-7	3-3	0-0	3	14
Schrempf	38	6-13	8-9	2-16	3	20
Smits	6	0-1	0-0	0-0	1	0
Fleming	18	4-10	1-2	1-3	2	9
Davis	21	3-6	5-6	3-6	0	11
K. Williams	12	1-7	0-0	5-8	1	2
S. Green	13	4-7	3-4	1-1	0	11
TOTALS 240 38-85 29-37 16-45 17 25 109						

FG% .447; FT% .784; Three-point goals 4-10, 400 (Person 3-6, Miller 1-1, Schrempf 0-3); Team Rebounds: 14; Blocked: 3 (Dreiling 2, Schrempf 1); Turnovers: 26 (M. Williams 8, Schrempf 6, Person 3, Miller 2, Thompson 2, K. Williams 2, Davis 1, S. Green 1, Smits 1); Steals: 8 (K. Williams 2, M. Williams 2, S. Green 1, Miller 1, Person 1, Thompson 1); Technical fouls: 1; Illegal Defense: 1.

BOSTON	38	27	37	28	130
Indiana	21	29	31	38	109



Robinson's 23 helped down the C's.

GAME BY GAME

BIRD'S RETURN IGNITES CELTICS

ATLANTA 102, BOSTON 90 FEBRUARY 28, 1992 THE OMNI

The Celts could only manage 13 points in the final quarter as they fell on the road in Atlanta. Kevin McHale scored 20 points to lead the C's, but Reggie Lewis was held to only nine points on 4-12 shooting. Rumeal Robinson led the Hawks with 23 points and nine assists.

BOSTON												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F
Gamble	37	7-10	1-1	0-2	3	15	Pinckney	18	2-7	0-1	2-4	0
Parish	31	7-7	4-5	2-6	2	18	Brown	35	5-14	0-0	0-2	14
Brown	35	5-14	0-0	0-2	14	10	Lewis	40	4-12	1-2	0-5	1
Lewis	40	4-12	1-2	0-5	1	9	McHale	33	9-16	2-2	1-7	5
McHale	33	9-16	2-2	1-7	5	20	Fox	19	3-7	2-2	0-4	1
Fox	19	3-7	2-2	0-4	1	8	Kleine	14	2-6	0-0	2-8	1
Kleine	14	2-6	0-0	2-8	1	4	Douglas	13	1-3	0-0	1-1	0
Douglas	13	1-3	0-0	1-1	0	2	TOTALS 240 40-82 10-13 8-39 27 22 90					

FG% .488; FT% .769; Three-point goals 0-4, .000 (McHale 0-1, Brown 0-3); Team Rebounds: 7; Blocked: 4 (Lewis 2, Gamble 1, McHale 1); Turnovers: 19 (Brown 6, Parish 5, McHale 3, Douglas 2, Gamble 2, Kleine 1); Steals: 11 (Brown 3, Gamble 2, Fox 2, Parish 2, Kleine 1, Lewis 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: 1.

ATLANTA												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F
Volkov	28	5-14	1-5	3-6	6	12	Willis	41	8-20	6-6	10-22	3
Willis	41	8-20	6-6	10-22	3	22	Rasmussen	33	5-8	0-0	1-5	1
Rasmussen	33	5-8	0-0	1-5	1	10	Augmon	32	7-11	1-1	1-4	3
Augmon	32	7-11	1-1	1-4	3	15	Robinson	33	10-16	2-5	0-2	9
Robinson	33	10-16	2-5	0-2	9	13	Ferrell	27	6-12	4-4	1-3	0
Ferrell	27	6-12	4-4	1-3	0	26	Cheeks	15	1-3	0-0	0-2	2
Cheeks	15	1-3	0-0	0-2	2	1	Graham	16	0-3	0-0	0-2	1
Graham	16	0-3	0-0	0-2	1	2	Koncak	15	1-3	0-0	0-3	1
Koncak	15	1-3	0-0	0-3	1	2	TOTALS 240 43-90 14-21 16-48 29 17 102					

FG% .478; FT% .667; Three-point goals 2-7, .286 (Robinson 1-1, Volkov 1-3, Graham 0-1, Koncak 0-1, Willis 0-1); Team Rebounds: 5; Blocked: 3 (Graham 1, Rasmussen 1, Robinson 1); Turnovers: 14 (Robinson 6, Willis 3, Augmon 1, Cheeks 1, Graham 1, Rasmussen 1, Volkov 1); Steals: 12 (Robinson 4, Cheeks 2, Ferrell 2, Augmon 1, Koncak 1, Volkov 1, Willis 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

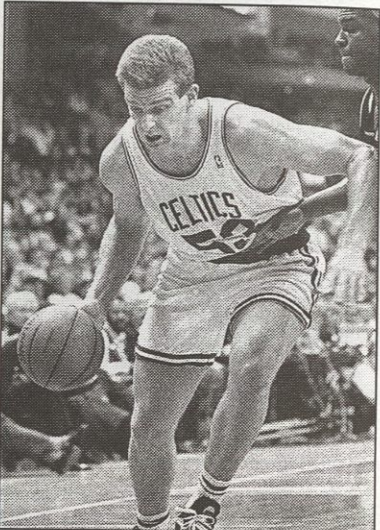
ATLANTA	32	22	27	21	102
Boston	31	22	24	13	90

FG% .447; FT% .750; Three-point goals 3-10, .300 (Iuzzolino 1-1, Moore 1-1, Blackman 1-2, McCray 0-1, Harper 0-5); Team Rebounds: 9; Blocked: 4 (Hodge 2, Moore 1, Williams 1); Turnovers: 18 (Blackman 3, Moore 3, Smith 3, Harper 2, Hodge 2, Iuzzolino 2, White 2, T. Davis 1); Steals: 7 (Harper 2, Williams 2, Hodge 1, Moore 1, Smith 1); Technical fouls: 1; Illegal Defense: None.

BOSTON	21	26	31	23	101
Dallas	21	27	20	23	91

BOSTON 125, ORLANDO 100 MARCH 4, 1992 BOSTON GARDEN

The Celts placed nine players in double figures as they romped by the Magic. Gamble paced Boston with 18 points and Larry scored 17 while also grabbing 14 rebounds. The C's shot 54% from the floor, while holding Orlando to only 43%. Terry Catledge paced Orlando with 20 points.



Kleine was one of nine players in double figures vs. Orlando.

BOSTON												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F
Bird	34	9-16	7-7	2-13	9	26	Gamble	33	3-10	4-4	0-2	2
Gamble	33	3-10	4-4	0-2	2	10	Parish	22	4-8	0-0	1-3	0
Parish	22	4-8	0-0	1-3	0	8	Brown	42	4-9	3-6	0-6	10
Brown	42	4-9	3-6	0-6	10	11	Lewis	40	11-18	0-0	1-1	2
Lewis	40	11-18	0-0	1-1	2	22	McHale	26	5-11	4-4	3-11	2
McHale	26	5-11	4-4	3-11	2	14	Pinckney	18	0-4	2-2	2-4	0
Pinckney	18	0-4	2-2	2-4	0	2	Fox	19	2-8	2-2	2-3	3
Fox	19	2-8	2-2	2-3	3	6	Douglas	6	0-1	2-2	0-0	1
Douglas	6	0-1	2-2	0-0	1	0	TOTALS 240 38-85 24-27 11-43 28 13 101					

FG% .447; FT% .889; Three-point goals 1-8, .125 (Bird 1-4, Brown 0-1, McHale 0-1, Lewis 0-2); Team Rebounds: 6; Blocked: 5 (Parish 2, Bird 1, Lewis 1, Pinckney 1); Turnovers: 9 (Bird 2, Brown 2, McHale 2, Douglas 1, Fox 1, Gamble 1); Steals: 12 (Gamble 3, Bird 2, Lewis 2, Parish 2, Brown 1, Fox 1, Pinckney 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: 1.

ORLANDO												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F
Smith	34	5-14	1-1	2-2	2	3	Catledge	32	7-17	6-8	3-4	1
Catledge	32	7-17	6-8	3-4	1	20	Roberts	33	5-14	2-2	2-9	0
Roberts	33	5-14	2-2	2-9	0	12	Skiles	30	6-12	4-4	0-4	7
Skiles	30	6-12	4-4	0-4	7	17	Bowie	42	6-11	1-1	2-9	2
Bowie	42	6-11	1-1	2-9	2	13	Turner	10	0-0	0-0	0-1	0
Turner	10	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	Kite	4	0-0	0-0	0-1	0
Kite	4	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	Vincent	18	4-12	2-2	0-3	1
Vincent	18	4-12	2-2	0-3	1	10	Reynolds	18	2-5	1-2	0-1	5
Reynolds	18	2-5	1-2	0-1	5	4	Williams	19	5-8	2-3	3-5	0
Williams	19	5-8	2-3	3-5	0	12	TOTALS 240 40-93 19-23 12-39 18 22 100					

FG% .430; FT% .826; Three-point goals 1-3, .333 (Skiles 1-2, Bowie 0-1); Team Rebounds: 7; Blocked: 6 (Bowie 2, Williams 2, Roberts 1, Skiles 1); Turnovers: 14 (Skiles 4, Bowie 2, Roberts 2, Smith 2, Kite 1, Turner 1, Vincent 1, Williams 1); Steals: 7 (Smith 2, Vincent 2, Bowie 1, Roberts 1, Turner 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

BOSTON	33	20	33	39	125
Orlando	27	18	26	29	100

BOSTON 117, L.A. CLIPPERS 100 MARCH 6, 1992 BOSTON GARDEN

The Celtics won their third in a row with Larry back in the lineup, as they rolled over the surging clippers. Bird was the leading scorer, again, with 19 points. The team also had another balanced scoring attack with seven players in double figures.

BOSTON												
Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F	Pts	Min	FG	FT	Reb	A	F
Bird	28	8-14	0-0	1-7	6	19	Gamble	30	4-12	1-2	3-6	2
Gamble	30	4-12	1-2	3-6	2	9	Parish	20	2-10	6-6	3-6	0
Parish	20	2-10	6-6	3-6	0	10	Brown	33	4-7	3-4	0-3	8
Brown	33	4-7	3-4	0-3	8	11	Lewis	30	9-20	0-0	2-5	2
Lewis	30	9-20	0-0	2-5	2	18	Douglas	24	5-8	6-6	0-2	6
Douglas	24	5-8	6-6	0-2	6	16	Fox	26	5-13	4-5	0-2	3
Fox	26	5-13	4-5	0-2	3	14	Kleine	20	4-8	1-2	5-8	0
Kleine	20	4-8	1-2	5-8	0	9	Pinckney	23	1-2	8-10	4-11	2
Pinckney	23	1-2	8-10	4-11	2	10	Vrankovic	6	0-1	1-2	0-1	0
Vrankovic	6	0-1	1-2	0-1	0	1	TOTALS 240 42-95 30-37 18-51 28 21 117					

FG% .442; FT% .811; Three-point goals 3-6, .500 (Bird 3-3, Douglas 0-1, Fox 0-2); Team Rebounds: 9; Blocked: 11 (Vrankovic 3, Parish 2, Pinckney 2, Fox 1, Gamble 1, Kleine 1, Lewis 1); Turnovers: 8 (Fox 3, Bird 1, Brown 1, Douglas 1, Parish 1, Vrankovic 1); Steals: 12 (Lewis 3, Bird 2, Pinckney 2, Brown 1, Douglas 1, Fox 1, Gamble 1, Parish 1); Technical fouls: None; Illegal Defense: None.

L.A. CLIPPERS

	Min	FG M-A	FT M-A	Reb O-T	A	F	Pts
Norman	36	7-14	0-1	2-8	3	4	14
Manning	34	8-14	6-7	2-7	3	13	22
Polynice	18	2-5	0-0	0-5	1	1	4
Harper	36	7-13	3-4	1-4	4	2	18
Grant	27	4-9	0-0	1-1	6	6	8
Kimble	16	3-5	2-2	1-1	0	2	8
Mayes	12	1-1	2-2	0-0	3	4	5
Smith	17	2-7	0-0	0-3	2	1	4
Vaught	26	6-10	3-4	2-11	2	0	15
Young	13	1-4	0-0	0-1	1	0	2
Ellis	5	0-3	0-0	1-1	0	1	0
TOTALS	240	41-85	16-20	14-42	23	24	100

CELTICS

LOCKER ROOM
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Sports Bottle
A quick convenient way to satisfy that big thirst. Insulated for hot or cold drinks in a rugged 32 oz. size. Celtic green with white lettering.
#29\$11.95



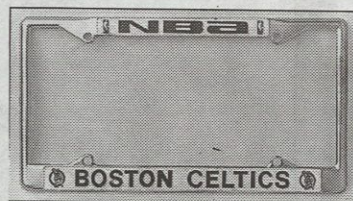
Game Towel
This is the official towel used on the bench during all Celtic games. 21"x43" ribbed weave with Celtics logo in green.
#40\$10.95

Round Key Ring
Solid brass key ring to let you know who's LOCKER #33!! in the Boston Garden.
#33\$6.95



CELTICS
FAN
PARKING
ONLY

Parking Sign
Show off your team loyalty with this 12"x18" heavy duty gauge styrene fan parking sign.
#4\$14.95



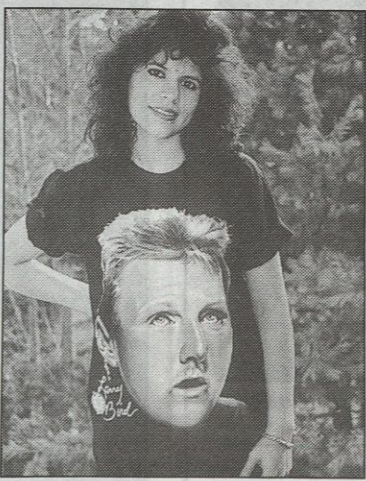
License Plate Frame
This heavy duty silver metal frame with Boston Celtics and NBA in green.
#64\$9.95



Card T-Shirt
This green t-shirt is the new card shirt of your favorite players in action. It has Bird, Lewis and McHale all on one great shirt.
#52\$14.95



Dee Brown T-Shirt
"Now Cleared for Take-Off." This says it all! This 100% cotton black t-shirt is brightly screened for the total impact of this high flying dunk.
#65\$14.95



Face to Face
Bold graphic picture of Larry Bird on this black t-shirt of 100% cotton. New for the 1992 season.
#62\$16.95



Three Dimensional
100% ash grey cotton t-shirt with a 3 dimensional Bird. #33 and Bird in large block letters with a picture of Larry shooting in the center.
#73\$14.95



New Aerial Assault II
Designs in every direction - on the front, in back and on the side. These contemporary team graphics were especially designed for all Celtics fans.
#67\$18.95



Hot Hoops Sweatshirt
All black heavy weight fleece sweat shirt screened in green, yellow and white says it all about Celtics basketball HOT HOOPS.
#10\$24.95



Bird Block Lettered T-Shirt
100% white cotton t-shirt for just the Bird Man. On the front left side is Celtics Boston Basketball and Bird Celtics on the back in bold block letter style with Bird in action shooting.
#49\$14.95



Larry Bird Stat Shirt
New for Larry Bird fans. 100% cotton ash grey t-shirt with his most impressive stats screened on the front in green and black
#54\$14.95



Reggie Lewis T-Shirt
Reggie now has his own t-shirt in black with an action photo and Lewis in bright green screened on the right side.
#51\$14.95



Sky Box T-Shirt
Who else? Larry's Sky Box Card featured on a 100% heavy wt. cotton t-shirt. Actual picture of the card is on the back of this colorful shirt with all his stats
#61\$18.95

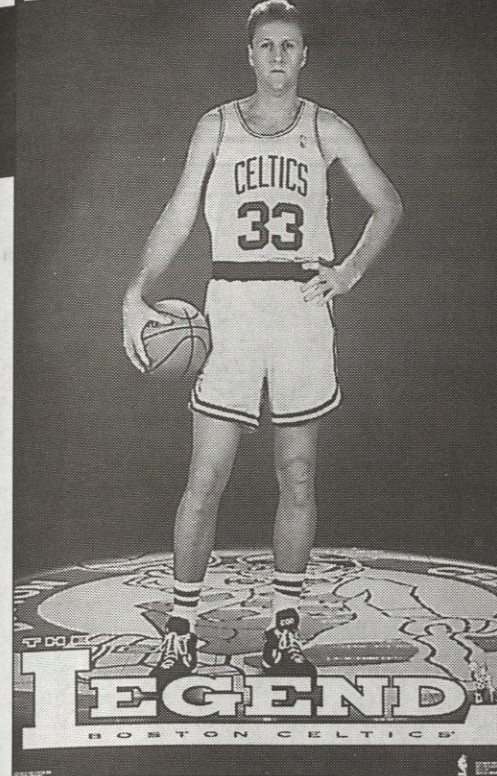


HOT TICKET Key Ring
Get your Celtic season pass here! Sold out in the Garden, but available for you in a solid brass rectangular ticket replica.
#18\$7.95

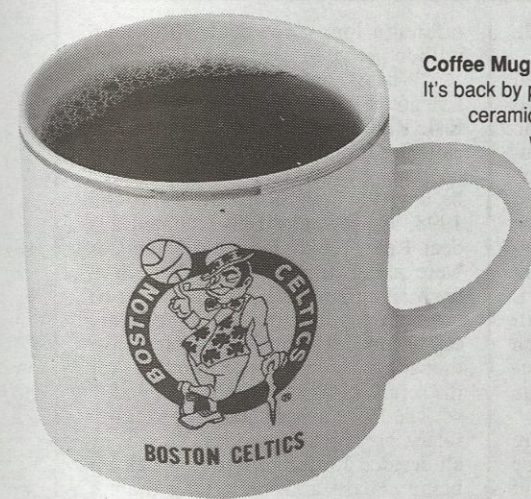


Double T-Shirt
Roll-up sleeves for this new design for the 1992 season. 100% cotton all black t-shirt trimmed in green, to give it that two t's look.
#36\$18.95

LARRY BIRD



"The Legend"
New 1992 poster for Larry Bird. It says it all in this 23"x35" colorful poster.
#68\$9.95

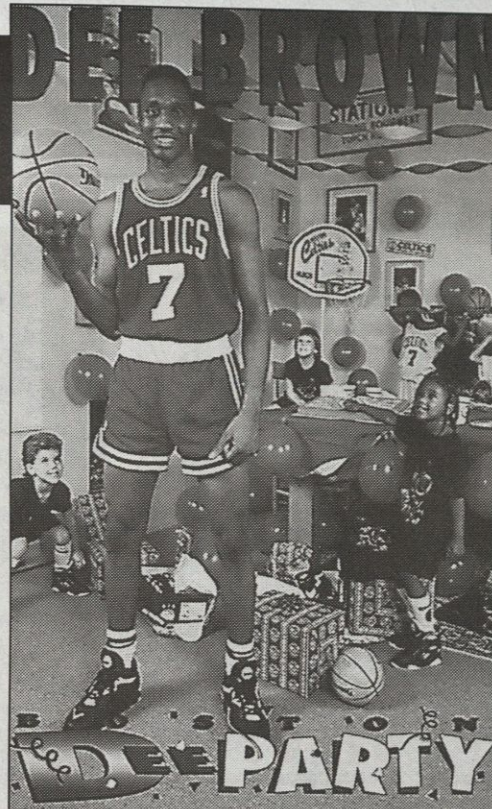


Coffee Mug
It's back by popular demand. This white ceramic mug is trimmed in gold with the Celtics logo located in the center
#31\$11.95

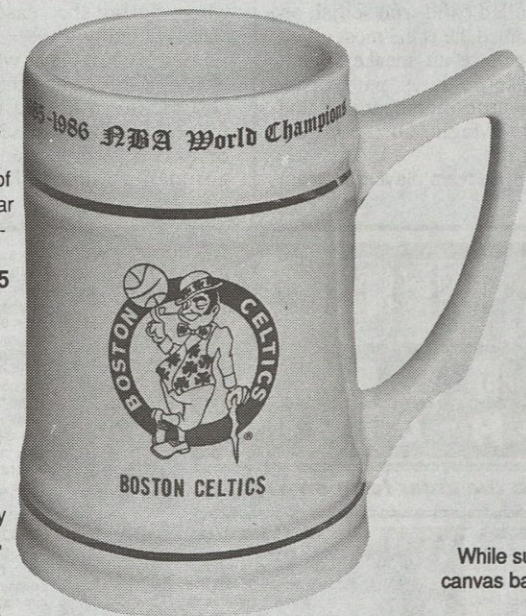


Championship Tankards
Collector's items! Play-off games listed on the back of each tankards. Specify year on order. 73-74, 75-76, 80-81, 83-84, and 85-86.
#28\$19.95

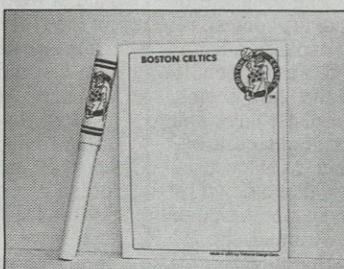
USA Basketball T-Shirt
America's Dream Team, caricaturized on this 100% cotton white t-shirt. On the back is listed all the countries with their flags brightly screened in various colors, that will play in the tournament.
#66\$15.95



"Dee Party"
New for Dee. This colorful 23"x35" poster showcases Dee unique in personality with this Boston theme.
#69\$9.95



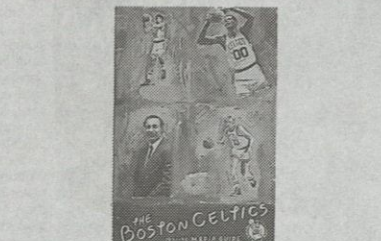
Pen and Paper Set
Write all your favorite Celtic fans on this note-paper with pen included
#53\$4.95



Telephone
Your official team Phone. Now you can be one up on anyone of your Celtics friends with this NEW green and white phone. Lighted big button keypad, desk/wall convertible, hearing aid compatible and 3-year warranty. A MUST FOR ANY CELTIC FANATIC!!!
#6\$59.95



Travel Bag
While supplies last! Order now this super tough canvas bag to use like the pros do. All green with logo on the sides.
#17\$49.95



1991-92 Media Guide
Get all the bio's and stats on all your favorite players.
#11\$9.95

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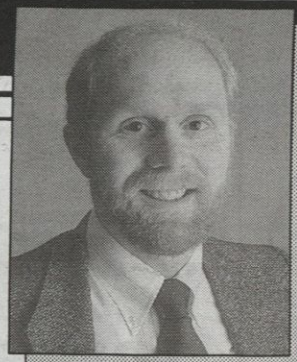
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By Glenn Rifkin

Whose NBA is this anyway? Has anyone been wondering the last few years, like I have, just what has happened to the league we knew and loved?

It sure doesn't feel like it did 10 years ago, and that is not simply because we were at the beginning rather than the end of the Bird-Magic era. I wonder whether expansion, which certainly put gobs of money in the pockets of everyone involved, hasn't diluted the product in a serious way. It seems like the power structure of the league has been tilted toward mediocrity and I can't think David Stern is particularly happy when he watches a Chicago-Orlando game or even a Milwaukee-Indiana contest.

Sure, some of the expansion teams are showing signs of life, especially down in Miami. But the show seems, dare I say, a bit tedious these days. Is it the drag of the endless regular season? Is it the disappearance of what used to be great rivalries, watered down by expansion? Is it the general attitude of players getting paid so much money in any one season that the fire of competition is nearly extinguished?

I guess it is all of the above and more. I get the feeling that somehow, over the past five years or so, the game vs. business aspect of the NBA has tilted precipitously toward the business side. Players don't so much get pumped for competition as for priming the cash machine. If you doubt it, read Sam Smith's book "The Jordan Rules."

In fact, if you are still a starry-eyed NBA lover, don't read it. It will depress the hell out of you. It is touted as an inside story for the Chicago Bulls' championship season. I begged for a copy for my birthday like a 10-year-old seeking a subscription to MAD magazine. I love the inside stories about sports, chronicles of the locker room banter, the camaraderie between players, the fierce struggles and pain of a long march to greatness.

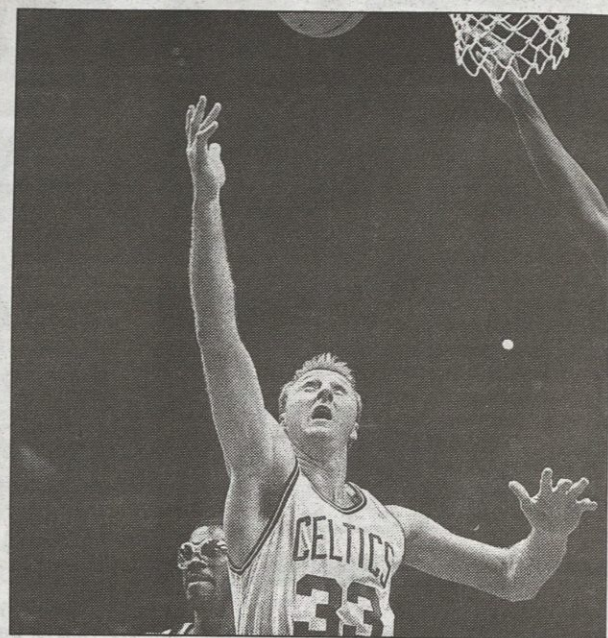
What Smith gives you here is a detailed look at the greed, pettiness and insecurity that now characterize professional athletics, and not just the NBA. What we find in Chicago is not a band of merry men, relentlessly pursuing the Holy Grail. It is a den of bickering, selfish, paranoid man-children who can barely overcome their own individual agendas to win on the court.

How this squad melded into one of the fiercest championship teams in recent memory is beyond me. Michael Jordan, the saintly sky-walking magician of Da Bulls, is anything but the person we think we see in the Bugs Bunny commercials. He is set apart from his teammates, from his coaches, from everyone. He is conceited, mean-spirited to teammates, pouty, demanding like a spoiled child, and selfish on the court. Granted, he is the most gifted player to ever lace up sneakers, and, granted, he can do things with a basketball in the heat of competition that neither Larry, Magic, Dr. J. or Earl Monroe ever did.

But he is not a team player in a team

FANS EYE VIEW

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE NBA?



Guys like Bird, who would play the same way for \$7 or \$7 million, are rare.

game. Believe it. Chicago team management was seriously considering trading Jordan in the late 1980s, convinced they could never win a title with him there.

The book portrays a Chicago squad broken into small factions — two players here, three there, with Jordan set apart and despised. The championship season was a long ride of disaffected players who seethed with hatred for general manager Jerry Krause, the pudgy, unkempt and distinctly unlikeable man who put together the current squad. Players like Scottie Pippen, Horace Grant, B.J. Armstrong, Bill Cartwright, Stacey King, and even Jordan himself, wanted to be elsewhere during the season despite the team's winning ways.

Here's a sample of what things were like in March, when the team had the best record in the Eastern Division: Pippen had been miserable all year because he hadn't been given a renegotiated contract. Then the Bulls

offered a long-term deal worth \$3.5 million per year.

"What if something happens to me? I've got nothing," Pippen told his agent, Kyle Rote, Jr. in a desperate late night call. But Pippen's teammates told him the market would be going up and he'd be crazy to lock himself up through 1998, as he would if he accepted this deal. Rote thought Pippen's teammates were using him, trying to keep him from signing a deal so there might be more money left for them. The salary cap had made the players vultures. Rote thought, preying on one another over the scraps of cash that were allotted.

The Bulls cared about three things: salary, playing time and statistics. They all derided Jordan behind his back for being selfish and not giving them a chance to show their stuff. Jordan was all over the Bulls to get rid of Cartwright or Grant or Will Perdue and bring in players who could help him get a title. But it didn't matter who was out there with him, he wanted the ball.

It would be one thing if the book were describing a losing team. But this was the NBA champion! Phil Jackson, the beleaguered coach who somehow held the chaos together, could only wonder what would have happened if the team had lost.

I can only wonder how many locker rooms around the league are like the Bulls. Probably most of them. And that can only make the hoop lovers among us wonder aloud how guys playing this wonderful game, making millions of dollars, can be so unhappy doing it.

Let's not kid ourselves. Professional athletes have been selfish and greedy since the first ancient Greek got the first drachma for tossing a discus. But I can't be convinced that the salaries have not crossed over the edge of reason. Think about it. If you had \$3.5 million in your bank, would you view your work the same way? No. You'd figure you were set for life financially and you would take it a bit easier. You'd do what you wanted and perhaps the fierceness of the competitive work world would be gone for you.

That would be wonderful, but it wouldn't make you a hungry pro athlete. Guys like Larry Bird, who would play the same way whether they were making \$7 or \$7 million, are rare. And the NBA, in my opinion, is poorer for it all. •

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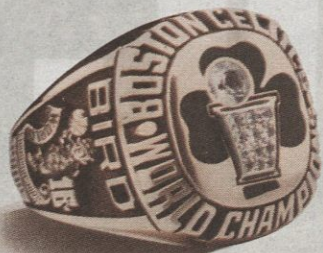
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